



# COMIC FANDOM READER™

THE BEST ARTICLES FROM THE  
CLASSIC FANZINES!

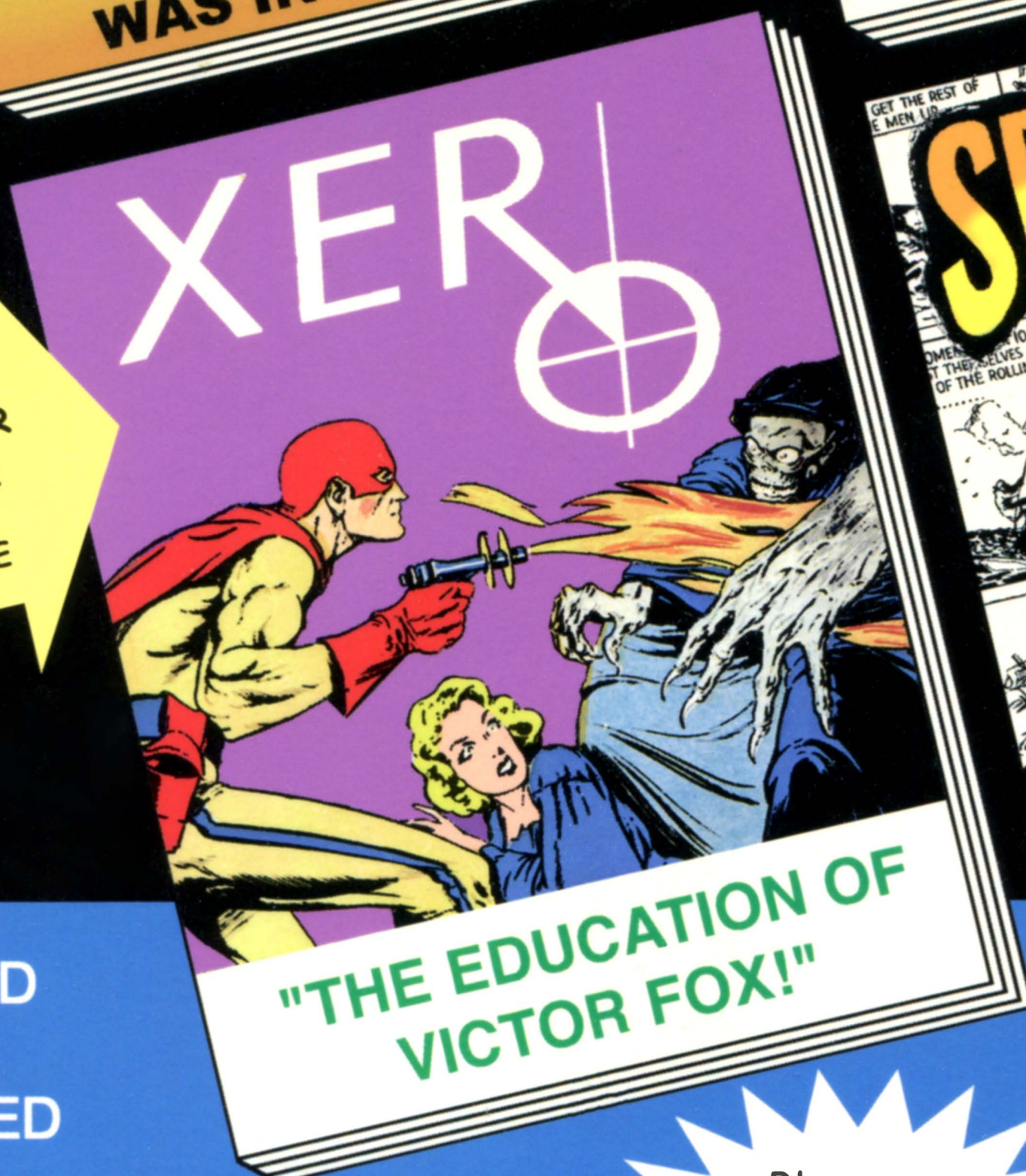
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THE  
BLACKHAWK  
SAGA  
BY DERRILL  
ROTHERMICH  
AND ROY  
THOMAS



"WHEN HAWKHOOD  
WAS IN FLOWER!"

THE GREAT "LOST"  
CHAPTER FROM  
ALL IN COLOR  
FOR A DIME  
BY  
RICHARD KYLE



"THE EDUCATION OF  
VICTOR FOX!"



THE  
BIG PARADE

THE RUTLAND,  
VERMONT  
HALLOWEEN  
PARADE  
DESCRIBED BY  
ITS "BATMAN"  
- TOM FAGAN



EISNER  
A MAN & HIS WORK

THE FIRST  
ATTEMPT TO  
CHRONICLE THE  
ENTIRE CAREER OF THE  
SPIRIT'S CREATOR,  
WILL EISNER  
BY  
RAYMOND MILLER AND  
THOMAS FISHER

COMPILED  
AND  
ANNOTATED  
BY

Bill Schelly

Plus: The  
Ronn Foss  
Retrospective!



A collage of various Marvel comic book covers. The central focus is a 'Doctor Doom Special' cover featuring Doctor Doom in his iconic armor, with the text 'DOCTOR DOOM Special' and 'THE MACABRE!'. To the left, there's a cover for 'ALTER EGO' with the text 'ALTER EGO' and 'DOCTOR DOOM'. Below that, a cover for 'Iron Man' with the text 'Iron Man' and 'DOCTOR DOOM'. To the right, there's a cover for 'The Saga of the Marvel Family' with the text 'The SAGA OF THE MARVEL FAMILY'. Other covers visible include 'The Hulk' and 'The Avengers'. The collage is set against a dark background with a grid pattern.

guidebo  
MICS FANDU

UPERMAN LITTLE NEMO CAPTAIN  
AMERICA TOR DICK TRACY  
BATMAN & ROBIN FLASH  
GORDON FANTASTIC FOUR  
MAGNUS THE SPIRIT ATOM  
SPIDER-MAN PRINCE VALIANT  
THE FLASH E.C. BLACKHAWK  
DOCTOR SOLAR SUB-MARINER  
DONALD & HIS MANY RELATIVES  
TARZAN CAPTAIN MARVEL GREEN  
LANTERN TERRY AND THE PIRATES  
SMILIN' JACK BLUE BEETLE  
POGO PLASTIC MAN SWEENEY  
WONDER WOMAN YOUNG ALLIES  
POWERSHOUS PEPPER  
DAREDEVIL BLUE BOLT ETC.!

W  
NO. 2  
SUMMER  
MASTER OF THE  
ENDLESS  
ONES!

WHO'S  
WHO  
IN  
comic  
fandom

FANTASY ILLUSTRATED  
NO. 1 WINTER 1962

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# COMIC FANDOM READER

Compiled & Annotated by

*Bill Schelly*







## Hamster Press

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BILL SCHELLY

Editorial Consultant  
JEFF GELB

Colorist  
NILS OSMAR

Accounting  
CHRISTOPHER DOWSING

Design Support  
AD SERVICES

## Contributors

Marty Arbunich • Jerry Bails  
Mike Barrier • John Benson  
Alfred Bester • Dave Bibby  
Landon Chesney • Rob Davis  
Bill DuBay • Will Eisner  
Tom Fagan • Thomas F. Fisher  
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Stan Goldenberg • Jim Harmon  
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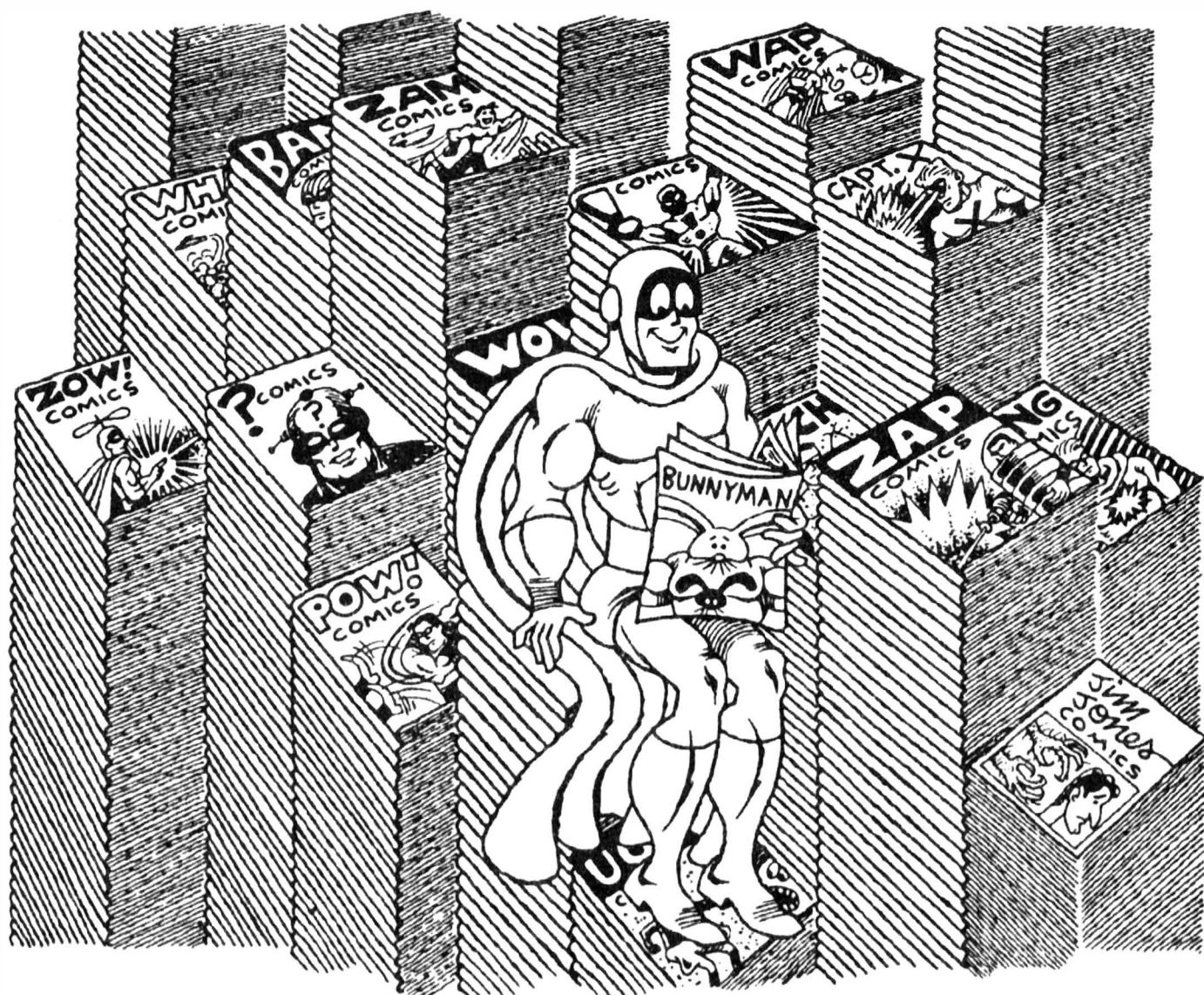
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## **Dedication**

To **Richard Kyle**, for his many intelligent and perceptive articles on the sequential art medium, and for unapologetically discussing comic books and strips in adult terms.

## **Special Thanks**

To **Steve Ditko** for his marvelous back cover, and to the following for their timely help:

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Email:  
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# The JOY OF FANZINES

## Introduction by Jeff Gelb

---

About a million years ago (or so it seems)...back in the Sixties, when I was but a wee teen-ager, a whole generation of kids like me were awakening to the joys of comic books. We came from diverse backgrounds, but I dare say most of us shared one thing in common: childhoods that were unhappy or unsatisfying in some way.

Maybe we were the ugly ducklings, or the social outcasts. Maybe our parents were divorced or were forced to move all the time so that we never made lasting friendships. Maybe we were just smarter than everyone around us! Whatever the reasons, we chose to turn away from the entertainments of our peers—the dances, the sports, the other social events—and turned instead, amazingly (and much to our parents' consternation), to comic books.

An entire generation of adolescents (mostly male) became hooked on these cheaply produced four-color magazines with their wild heroes, their clever stories and most of all, their artwork—from the eye-popping action of Jack Kirby to the luscious babes of Wally Wood, from the sci fi cityscapes of Carmine Infantino to the vivid war scenes of Joe Kubert.

Yes, the wartime generation had birthed the baby boom, and a whole lot of us boomers found comic books at about the same time. The comics publishers noticed that we had taken notice of them. The market began to be flooded with titles, genres, and even more publishers. Somehow we kept up with them, even with limited allowances, limited time, and in spite of our parents' displeasure. Maybe, in fact, it was our parents turning their collective nose up to comic books that added to their "coolness quotient", in much the same way that, ten years before, a generation of teenagers had embraced rock and roll while their parents bemoaned the loss of "real music".

In any case, we were hooked. Each week we would search out the new

comics, which we had to find when and where we could in that era before comic book stores. In fact, the thrill of the hunt for new comics was part of the pleasure of collecting them. Once we bought them, we devoured them—rarely in public, often in bed at night after homework and before sleep set in.

We'd read them cover-to-cover, even the goofy ads and especially the letter columns. It was in those letter columns that we first became aware of two amazing, mind-boggling, life-altering facts: 1) there were thousands of other kids like us who also loved comic books (so we weren't alone after all), and 2) there had existed an entire universe of comics *before we had even been born*. Indeed, some of our current favorite heroes were actually new incarnations of characters created as far back as World War II. Entire publishers, let alone heroes, had come and gone. Letters from older readers alluded to these characters and their adventures, and we could only imagine what we had missed: hundreds of heroes, thousands of stories, millions of memories. How to catch up? How to have even a hint of the experience of those now dusty, all-but-forgotten gaudy treasures? Suddenly the need to know more about the secret history of the comics medium became a mad passion for hundreds of new comics-lovers.

That's where the fan magazines known as fanzines came in. Almost simultaneous with the onset of the Sixties, came the fanzines: little mimeographed and dittoed publications advertised in those comic book letter columns. These fanzines presented hero histories, company chronicles, and even (joy of joys!) super heroes created by the fans themselves. For it was a rare breed of comics fan of the Sixties who didn't secretly create his own comics, or at least invent his own characters. And when fanzines came along, with the opportunity to share the unbridled joy of our own creations, along with

whatever knowledge we did have of the comics that had come before our time, that was a magical moment.

I personally published fourteen fanzines from 1963 through 1970. I started with *Heroes*, the first three issues of which were done on carbon paper and sold to one or two friends for a nickel apiece. The last two issues were co-edited with a new friend I'd found whose father worked for the then-fledgling Xerox Corporation (I grew up in Rochester, New York, the home of Xerox). I allowed my friend to share the editorial tasks in return for his father making five copies of each issue at work. These were "crudzines" to be sure, crudely drawn and with barely intelligible articles, but they gave me the publishing bug. In the next six years, I went on to edit, write and draw several more fanzines, each one a bit better than the one before, each selling to a few more like-minded fans. Many of my better fanzines were produced with co-editor and school chum Howard Brenner, who owned his own mimeograph machine. (Can you spot a trend in how I chose my publishing partners?)

Beyond my own editorial efforts, I was contributing madly to any other fanzine whose editor would accept my work. I'd rush home from school, finish my homework, then get to my true labor of love: the multitudes of articles and art I produced for fellow fanzine editors. In fact, while I didn't meet Bill Schelly in person until the early 1990s (thanks to our membership in the comics amateur press alliance *Capa-Alpha* and a simultaneous visit to the San Diego Comic Con), back in the Sixties he and I often contributed to the same fanzines. On one or two occasions, we had even collaborated through the mails on an amateur comic strip, my part being the transferring of his penciled pages onto ditto masters. It may not have been art, but it sure was fun. Beyond that, it approximated the manner in which professional comic books were created. And while I



never thought I'd have the chance to actually write or draw a comic book, in fanzines I had found a home—even an audience—for my creative comics ideas.

Those were heady times. While the high school days dragged by like torture, the nights at home were heaven, starting with the daily trip to the mailbox to see what orders had come in for my fanzine, or what new publications from others had arrived, or what editor had requested my contribution. A lonely teenager had found a whole new world in which to immerse himself....a world of creativity, satisfaction, and friendship with people who not only put up with, but *encouraged* my creative idiosyncrasies. It was a soul-satisfying experience, to say the least.

How could I *not* love fanzines? For a quarter (or at best fifty cents), I could lose myself in their worlds of information about the comics that had existed in that hallowed time known as the Golden Age of comics. This was the beginning of comics journalism, and as you will find out when you read the book that follows, the best of it was very well-written indeed. These writers knew their material and knew how to present it in an adult fashion. That was *another* joy of fanzines: these contributors felt like peers to me, and treated me as such, despite the fact that many of them were years older than me. It was the best way to gain self-esteem I'd ever found.

So, thanks to the fanzines, I learned about old publishers, comics, and creators, and in those same pages, discovered that some comics fans were nearly as talented as the comic book creators their work so lovingly emulated. The Grass Greens, Biljo Whites and Ronn Fosses of comicdom stunned me with their obvious talents and their colorful creations. Never mind that many of their creations were homages of then-current hero-types; they were exciting, well-told, compact comic strips and they were being presented to an elite group of fans.

Anyone with twelve cents in his pocket could pick up the latest adventure of Spider-Man or Green Lantern, but only a select few got to experience the exploits of the Eye or the Eclipse. It was like discovering Shangri-La in your mailbox!

It was wonderful ... and then it was gone.

Or so it seemed to me. I folded up my publishing tent to go off to college, and I suspect so did many others. Or perhaps they went into the armed forces and into Vietnam, or got married, or got jobs, or just grew up. Whatever, they went away and comics fanzines were stuffed into boxes in closets—when they were saved at all—and their rich history of articles and art was all but forgotten until the 1990s, when Bill Schelly, God bless his fannish soul, woke up one day and said, “Something this powerful can not be forgotten. Lo, there shall be a book about the good old days of comics fandom!” And a damned good book *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* was.

Buoyed by the positive reception it received, buddy Bill (who'd contributed to at least as many fanzines as I had in his heyday) followed suit with more books that collected the best of the amateur comic strips from the fanzines of the Sixties and Seventies.

But where was the book that pulled together some of the best of the fanzine *text features*? Those lovingly-researched and well-told histories of heroes, companies and creators that had been my comic book college as a teen-ager? And the bits of amateur fiction and parody that gripped our imaginations almost as firmly? Didn't those pinnacles of prose deserve their own showcase? Of *course* they did, and this book is the remarkable result.

For within these covers, you, oh-so-lucky reader, will discover—or rediscover, as the case may be—a lost era, when the history of comics was first being uncovered by a generation of enthusiastic, talented writers and researchers.

That's what comes through in these pieces: the unbridled love of the comics medium shared by the writers (and artists) involved. Make no mistake about it: no one, but no one, contributed art or articles for fanzines for money back then. They did it for the sheer love of comics, and the joy of sharing their passion with kindred souls—like you and me.

In fact, you'll get to know a number of those writers and artists in a way that you haven't before, for Bill has also turned the spotlight on those fans in an interview section that makes up a substantial portion of this tome.

*Comic Fandom Reader* starts by putting things in proper perspective, with “I Remember Comic Books,” a reminder of what it was like way back in the late 1950s when comics publishing was at its lowest ebb; author Jim Harmon (perhaps best known for his books on Old Time Radio) seems to be waving a fond farewell to the medium.

Then follows an entertaining comics history lesson by Dick Lupoff who hailed a resurgence of interest in comics of old in “Re-Birth” from the legendary fanzine *Comic Art* #1 in 1961.

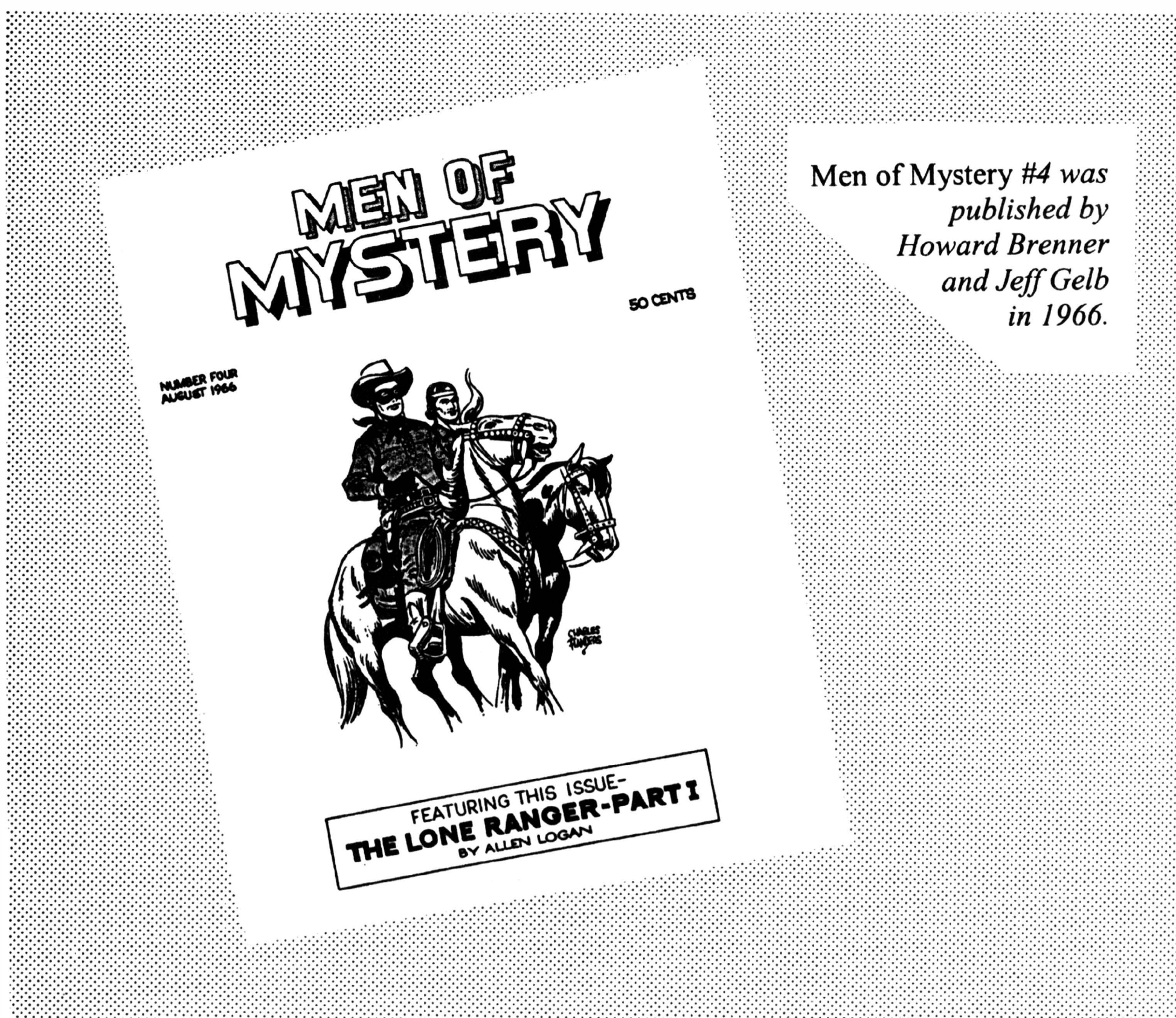
Next is as erudite an overview of a comics publisher as you've ever read, courtesy Richard Kyle's lengthy look at the unique output of golden-age also-ran publisher Fox Comics. “The Education of Victor Fox” is smarter than any of the comics about which it writes!

In fact, what amazes me about all of these articles is not just how well-researched they are, but how well written they are, as if the pieces were being done for *Time* or *Newsweek's* audience, not for the dozens or, with luck, a few hundred who originally read these words. Now *that's* passion!

Somehow Bill has unearthed a forgotten fanzine called *Tales of Torment* for a humorous story about a collector running amuck. It's a real gem. You won't soon forget this bizarre narrative by John E. Stockman.

“What amazes me about all of these articles is not just how well-researched they are, but how well written they are, as if the pieces were being done for *Time* or *Newsweek's* audience, not for the dozens or, with luck, a few hundred who originally read these words. Now *that's* passion!”





After that is a captivating study of an artist written by Russ Manning, himself one of the all-time comic artist greats. Yes, even comics pros occasionally submitted to the fanzines, though usually art, not articles. But Manning was a fan first and even as a pro, remained a comic art aficionado. When you discover which artist Russ is discussing, you'll flip! I know I did, but with a knowing nod—Manning was right to recognize one of the unsung giants of the comics field, even though, at the time, few fans acknowledged this mystery man's work at all.

Then it's on to super-fan Tom Fagan's personal history of how and why he witnessed the addition of Batman to a small Halloween parade in Rutland, Vermont....which became a celebrated annual event, and was immortalized in many a comic book story in the early Seventies.

Dave Herring's excellent *Mad* homage zine *Odd* is represented with an impressive and amusing cover gallery. I was thrilled to have Dave contribute covers to two of my own fanzines way back when; he was one of the great talents of the time.

It's no surprise to see Roy Thomas represented in these pages. The question was undoubtedly *which* Thomas-scribed article to run, and while a tough choice, Bill wisely picked Derrill Roethermich's and Roy

Thomas' affectionate look at the history of Blackhawk—a real highlight from the pages of the first run of *Alter Ego*.

We then focus in on the best of Bill's own fanzine of that era, *Sense of Wonder*. It's all great stuff, and full of surprises, too, like a re-drawn version of the Eisner-esque "Heisenberg Alley," and excellent pieces by John T. Ryan, Raymond Miller and Thomas Fisher. A highlight for me is the return of the old shambler himself, The Immortal Corpse, in one of the best of those memorable stories, which always seemed as if they had leapt from the pages of a moldering pulp magazine.

When Bill was researching *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*, he interviewed many of fandom's founders. (I even helped on a few of them.) These will really take you back to those halcyon days. The interview with Dick and Pat Lupoff, two of the most important figures in the birth of comicdom, is especially fine.

Bill's first publication of fandom history was 1992's *Ronn Foss Retrospective*, long out of print. He's generously shared much of its content here to reach a wider audience of Foss fans, as well as those who will be delighted to see Ronn's stylish work here for the first time and discover one of fandom's true shining stars. The interview with Foss, who passed away in 2001, provides rare insight into the

man's interests, motivations, and theories about art. It's the closest anyone will now be able to come to meeting this supremely-fannish fellow.

As if all that weren't enough, *Comic Fandom Reader* gives us an entire section of ultra-cool bonus material, and they are welcome additions.

First is Nils Osmars' look back at his days as a well-known presence in Marvel letter columns of the late 1960s. Then follows a tremendous ride down memory lane by Malcolm Willits, co-owner of the famous Collectors Book Store in Hollywood. If you have ever wondered what it was like to actually grow up and buy comic books during the Golden Age (and I sure have), Willits's excellent memory and homespun writing style provide the next best thing to being there. It's a time machine trip back to the era we all wish we'd experienced (with an unlimited allowance!).

The icing on the cake—and what a treasure trove—is Bill's own listing of comics fanzines. Sure, it's not complete (hey, he even missed one of mine: the digest-sized *Glory Comics* one-shot I produced back in 1964). But man oh man, hand me my drool cup as I contemplate the treasures in Bill's Comic Fandom Archive collection. Not only did he comb through them to find the contents of this lovingly-produced book, but he gives us a year-by-year walk through the Golden Age of fanzines.

The common thread winding through every page of the *Comic Fandom Reader* is how much comic art fans of the Sixties loved the medium. I'm sure you share that passion, or you probably wouldn't be reading this book.

I have just one question, Bill, and I'm sure it will be echoed by all who read this thrilling collection:

Is this *really* your last book about comic fandom? Say it ain't so!

— Jeff Gelb

JEFF GELB lives in California with his wife, son and two cats. He is a music industry veteran by day, and by night, edits and writes for the *Hot Blood* and *Flesh & Blood* series of anthologies. Gelb finally realized his lifelong dream to be published in a professional comic book when he wrote the 1996 Dark Horse *Bettie Page* comic book at the request of old pal Dave Stevens...but he swears it wasn't significantly more rewarding than inking his old buddy Bill's pencils on an adventure of the Purple Patriot, back in the good old days of comics fanzines.



# 1 – The Best of the Classic Fanzines

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**A**lthough science fiction fanzines had sporadically carried comics-related material—especially when it had to do with comic books that dealt with speculative fiction—and E.C. fanzines had briefly flourished in the mid-to-late 1950s, by the coming of the 1960s, there were no publications that catered strongly to hardcore comic book fans. Although DC Comics (then National Periodical Publications) had begun introducing new versions of their old heroes as early as late 1956, it wasn't until Jerry Bails' and Roy Thomas' *Alter Ego* in April 1961 that a fanzine appeared especially for aficionados of costumed heroes. Before long, comics fans were rallying around *AE* and a number of fanzines that followed in its footsteps, and soon comic fandom was growing by leaps and bounds.

The articles and stories reprinted in the first section of this book represent a smattering of some of the most interesting pieces published between 1961 and 1965, as well as one that pre-dated them all. With the many magazines and books devoted to comics today, the sort of writing in these articles might not seem extraordinary, but consider what it was like not only for the fans who gratefully read them back then, but for the writers in that time frame. There was no body of research material available to draw upon, and (contrary to what some might think) old comic books were just as hard to find then as now. Each article was a ground-breaker, treading for the first time on virgin territory.

The term "Golden Age of comics" did not exist until Dick Lupoff invented it. And the "Silver Age" wasn't christened for some time to come.

It was all a vast, unexplored frontier. The challenges tackled by these writers were formidable... yet, tackle them they did.

Let's take a brief look at each piece, then—and I'll give my reasons for including it in this historical collection.

## **"I Remember Comic Books"** *Peon* #38 (1957)

With the advent of the Comics Code in 1955, and the comics industry implosion a couple of years later, I'm sure the pickings on the comic stands in 1957 were thin indeed. When Jim Harmon wrote this installment of his "Harmony" column for *Peon*, it must have seemed that comic books' best days lay in the past.

"I Remember Comic Books" represents perhaps the earliest look at comics from a nostalgic point of view. As such, it is a precursor of sorts of the important series of remembrances that began three years later in *Xero*, under the umbrella title of "All in Color, For a Dime." In fact, Harmon himself wrote one of the entries in that later series. But this was his first stab at it, in what was otherwise a science fiction fanzine published by Charles Lee Riddle of Port Deposit, Maryland.

## **"Re-Birth"** *Comic Art* #1 (1961)

There's no mystery why Richard Lupoff's "Re-Birth" merits inclusion here, chronicling as it does the coalescence of interest in comics among science fiction fans, most especially on the occasion of the 1960 WorldCon in Pittsburgh. Here is the earliest instance I have found of comic books' first great era being referred to "their golden age."

"Re-Birth" was the lead feature in the first issue of Don Thompson and Maggie Curtis' fanzine *Comic Art*; not long after, Don and Maggie were married, and published a total of seven issues between 1961 and 1968. Later, they assumed the editorship of comic fandom's weekly newspaper *Comics Buyer's Guide*.

To augment this article, please see the interview with Dick and Pat Lupoff on page 112. It is, I believe, the only time these folks were interviewed in detail about their lives and the circumstances that led to the publication of *Xero* and "All in Color, For a Dime."

## **"The Education of Victor Fox"** *Xero* #8 (1962)

Meanwhile, in his own publication, Dick Lupoff (along with wife Pat) were shepherding that afore-mentioned "All in Color, For a Dime" series of articles. Most of them were later reprinted (in somewhat revised form) in the Arlington House book by the same name; recently, that book was reprinted as a trade paperback by Krause Publications.

One of the most popular entries in the series, however, did not make it into the Arlington House book. "The Education of Victor Fox," written by Richard Kyle, was not long on facts, but it was an intelligent, somewhat in-depth look at the type of material one could find in early Fox super hero comics; it also dealt with the reasons for Fox Publications' demise in the early 1950s—which is where the article's title comes into play. We are extremely pleased to be able to reprint it in full in these pages.

Like the other articles in this book, we may have edited the piece very slightly for grammar or punctuation, but made no attempt to update the factual material. Therefore, though we've inserted a footnote to reveal the true identity of "Basil Berold", we have not gone so far as to incorporate that change into the text. Our editorial policy has been to present this material just as it was, for historical purposes.

Reproducing the artwork proved to be more of a problem. *Xero* was printed via mimeograph, and the illustrations for this particular piece were not up to their usual standards. Therefore, it fell to Yours Truly to trace Jim Moriarty's "barbecue" drawing (as close to the original as possible), and add a couple of character drawings (Yarko and Dr.



Fung) similar to those used by Kyle and Lupoff. Of course, the actual reproductions of comic book covers (used in the opening montage which was suggested by Richard Kyle) are “new” as well.

**“Armand the Terrible”**  
*Tales of Torment* #1 (1963)

New, also, is the *Tales of Torment* “cover” on page 31, which was originally intended for a fanzine-format publication devoted entirely to the bizarre tales of collecting torment written by John E. Stockman.

*ToT* was not a widely circulated fanzine, but in its publishing history from 1963 into the 1970s, Stockman offered a series of, well...unforgettable portraits about some of the most pathetic members of Edgar Rice Burroughs, science fiction and comics fandom. What author Stockman lacked in polish he more than made up for in panache. I hope you will agree that “Armand the Terrible” is worthy of inclusion in this anthology.

**“Model T to T-Bird”**  
*Batmania* #1 (1964)

Why did Russ Manning’s “Model T to T-Bird” appear in Biljo White’s *Batmania* #1, certainly an unlikely place for a tribute to the great Tarzan and western artist of the 1950s, Jesse Marsh. I have a theory: Biljo was to take over the publication of *Alter Ego* at this time; I suspect that material



Odd #12

for future issues was forwarded to him by former *AE* editor and founder Jerry Bails, and that “Model T” was among the articles originally submitted to Jerry.

Whatever the reason, this article (which was later reprinted in my own *Sense of Wonder* #12 in 1972) reminds

those of us who may have forgotten that Manning was not only the artist of the successful Magnus, Robot Fighter series for Gold Key comics, but was also a tremendous fan of the comics medium. He was quite active in fandom from the outset, until his untimely passing in the early 1980s.

Accompanying this article is a bonus feature: a reprint of an entire strip drawn by Jesse Marsh in his heyday, “The Bridges” from Key Publications’ *Naval Patrol* #4 (1955). The stats for this were provided by Ron Frantz; we thank him for allowing Hamster Press to offer this near-E.C.-quality war story as further evidence of Marsh’s talent.

**“The Big Parade”**  
*Batmania* #3 (1965)

More “on point” for White’s *Batmania* was “The Big Parade,” the initial article written about the annual Halloween parade in Rutland, Vermont. Tom Fagan, who masqueraded as Batman in that parade, was one of the top writers for the fanzines in this era. Fanzine editors recognized the quality of his work; his byline appeared in most of the best amateur magazines, including an excellent series on Airboy in Martin Greim’s *Comic Crusader*.

**Odd Cover Gallery**  
Odd 1963-4

Okay, there’s no getting around the fact that these covers don’t qualify as text features—but they’re so much fun that we made a place for them anyway. Aren’t you glad we did?

Steve and Dave Herring’s *Odd* magazine was perhaps the premiere humor fanzine of the mid-1960s. Steve was a gifted writer (who may have originated some or all of the gags in these covers), and his younger brother Dave was an artist *par excellence*. Dave was extremely adept at coaxing the best possible printing out of a ditto machine, and he proved just as good at designing and drawing for photo-offset reproduction in pen-and-ink.

His best-known cover, for *Odd* #12 (left) is reproduced full-size in *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*; here you will find those for *Odd* #8 through 10. (The cover to #11 is reproduced, smaller, in the “Fanzines By Year” section.)

**“When Hawkhood was in Flower!”**  
*Alter Ego* #8 (1965)

Finally, we conclude this part of *Comic Fandom Reader* with a little gem by Derrill Rothermich and Roy Thomas. It got squeezed out of our *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Fanzine* book, which reprinted the best material from all eleven original fanzine-issues of *AE*.

Roy Thomas, who succeeded Stan Lee as editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, undoubtedly needs no introduction to comic book fans; Derrill Rothermich was known mainly for his brief tenure as editor of *The Comic Reader/On The Drawing Board* in 1966. Together they teamed up to create this fond look back at one of comics’ most long-lived teams: the Blackhawks. The illustrations, some quite obviously based on art by Chuck Cuidera, were beautifully rendered by *AE*’s then art-editor Biljo White.

Much has been written about the Blackhawks since then, but somehow none of the pieces have managed to capture the excitement of this, one of the first.



Harmony, a column by Jim Harmon

## "I Remember Comic Books"

From *Peon* #38 (Feb. 1957)

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I remember comic books.

I don't suppose they will ever completely disappear but the Comics Code censorship has maimed the entire industry, if not killed it. I've noticed a number of slick magazines gloating over the number of comic publishers going out of business. Of course, we can hardly expect sympathy for the writers, artists and editors put out of work but one might expect some sympathy for the unemployed printers and pressmen from the national publications.

There's been a lot said about comics censorship—mostly by people, with their eagle eye on the First Amendment, but never on the colorful comics page. I've said part of it. The difficulty is the same one they are trying to impose on the television industry. Ding Dong School is a very good program—I saw it once—but they are holding this up as the standard for all children's TV programs. They used to do this with the late Nila Mack's fairy tale radio show "Let's Pretend." The social workers overlook the fact that these programs are of absolutely no interest to any child over seven. To a healthy, active twelve year old, they are as intolerably babyish as a game of patty-cake.

Anthropomorphism has become the by-word of the present comic books. Gorillas are grateful to lions for saving them from the wicked hunters (evidently these writers have never read the original version of what happened to the thorn-pulling mouse). There is growing propaganda for racial inferiority complex—the human race is not ready for Space, for the Secret Weapon, to know the Truth. The war comics have become dangerously jingoistic. I suspect letting children read of wars that are exciting and where literally no one is killed or even injured is far more dangerous than having them read the War-is-Hell E.C. books. Damn it, I know it is!

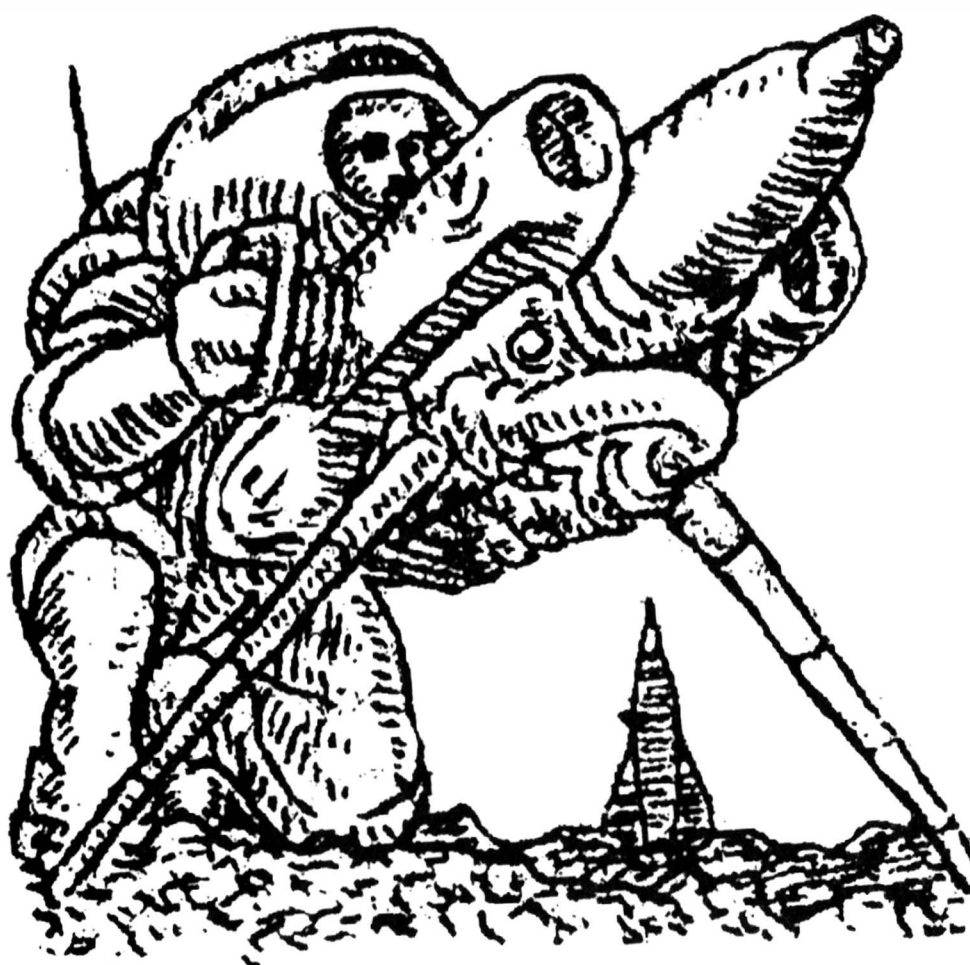
But there was another day of lurid adventure, naked heroes and heroines, and lusty violence. This was a day before the era of the juvenile delinquent, the crazy mixed-up kid. This was the era of *Jungle Comics*, *Planet Comics*, *Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Captain Marvel*, *Tom Mix Comics*, and of *Superman*—who alone remains, in faded fashion.

*Jungle Comics*, with its variations on the Tarzan (or Mowgli) theme had the standard ape man, Kaanga, the ape boy, Wambi, the voodoo ape man, Tabu. It also had an ape girl, but I can't remember her name. The same publisher (Fiction House) had another ape girl, Sheena, in *Jumbo Comics*. She survives on television. The stories in this one were tight action, but it was the pictures that were of the main interest. Nearly every page and nearly every frame contained a gorgeous woman dressed in nearly nothing, and that skintight. It's too bad such an educational magazine no longer exists. It was a pleasant way to study human anatomy—a subject that today's kids are learning in a distorted manner since comic book women no longer have legs or breasts.

Doubtless some of you remember the similar situation in *Planet Comics*. Here the standard of story was somewhat

higher. A year or so ago, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* ran the text version of a Star Pirate adventure that had been used in the Fiction House sports pulp, *Fight Stories*. Besides the Raffles-Saint of Space, there were Flint Barker and Reef Ryan, Space Rangers. Then—Lost World. This was undoubtedly the duller of the *Planet Comics* stories—Hunt Bowman (who was an archer) and his girl, Lisa, fought interminably against the lizard-faced Voltamen, ravagers of terrestrial civilization, who spoke English sentences with Germanic construction. That is: With construction Germanic, spoke they sentences English. On the other hand, a short-lived series, Futura, was not much better plotwise but it had some of the most beautiful science fiction artwork I've ever seen anywhere—the artist was similar to Wallace Wood of E.C. and some *Planet Stories* illustrations, but his style was looser which gave an ethereal quality to the scene.

In those lusty days, *Superman-DC-National* gave out with something more than, with all respect to Julius Schwartz, the wishy-washy pablum they now offer. *All-Star Comics* brought all of their super-heroes into one long story—rather like the monsters in a Universal horror picture of the forties. For a long time, the rule of the Justice Society was that a member could not remain in more than an honorary fashion if he appeared in a comic book all his own. With all that extra income, obviously Superman, Batman, Flash, and Green Lantern did not have to work so hard for justice. But various members dropped out of the society when their regular comic book slots were dropped—Hour-Man, Starman, etc.—and the honorary members trooped back; Superman and Batman for one issue, Flash, Green Lantern and Wonder Woman for good. As a matter of fact, long after the day of the masked crime fighter passed, *All-Star* remained (like *FAPA*) the last home of the tired warriors, unwanted and unloved. Over the years, some of the members were:



The only illustration to accompany this column in the original fanzine. (Artist unknown.)



HAWKMAN, masked with a hawkhead helmet, adorned with giant wings, sometimes; companion of the similarly garbed Hawkgirl (also in *Flash Comics*).

DR. MID-NITE, able to see in the dark, blind in daylight without dark glasses, posed as the blind Dr. McNighter (*All-American Comics*).

THE ATOM, originally so-called for his small size, but after 1945, because he tapped atomic energy for his strength (*Adventure Comics*).

HOUR MAN, a very early comic character. He obtained one hour of super strength by taking a powder (non-habit forming, I presume); this drug-user suggestively appeared in *More Fun Comics*.

STARMAN tapped stellar power with a Star wand (*Adventure Comics*).

JOHNNY THUNDER, comedy relief, could call on a Geni-like Thunderbolt by saying the ancient Celenese magic words *Cie-U* (Say You) which he only did by accident, i.e. "Say you guys can't do this to me!" (*Flash Comics*.)

THE SPECTRE—now, here was a character! He was not just a demi-god; he was God! He could do anything—bring the dead back to life, visit Hell and Heaven, change size, be everywhere, do everything. His only trouble was that he was in love with a girl called Clarence and since he was a ghost (of a policeman whose identity he still maintained) he couldn't hope to marry her. I don't know why—I bet this boy could do anything. However, finally, he talked to God in person (a memorable comic-strip sequence) and God decided to bring his body back to life for the Spectre who nevertheless retained his supernatural powers. But he never did marry that gal.

DR. FATE, somewhat similar to the Spectre. (*More Fun Comics*.)

GREEN LANTERN was one of my favorites because he used "will power". I suppose this strip appealed to the future Rosicrucians and psionics-experimenters. Alan Scott was an engineer. (Incredibly he switched from a railroad engineer to a radio broadcasting engineer, as if the writer of the book thought any kind of engineer was essentially the same as any other one.) He found an ancient green lantern and fashioned a ring from it. The lamp had been made from a meteorite in ancient China that had the ability to materially project his will with beams of green light. This mounted up to letting GL

walk through walls, set up a force screen to protect himself from bullets or knives—but not anything organic in nature like human flesh or wooden clubs. He could also fly and shoot out rays from his ring to burn, lift, attract, repel. Scott had to charge his ring against the lantern every 24 hours by chanting: "In brightest day, in darkest night/ No evil shall escape my sight/ Let those who worship evil's might/ Beware my power—Green Lantern's Light." Frankly, the whole thing smacked of superstition.

In later (and declining years) GL traded in a derby-hatted cabbie named Doiby Dickles for a red-haired wench called Harlequin with glasses to match—she was a criminal whose whole career was devoted to pulling crimes so fiendish that the Lantern would "marry" her to save the world from them—her price. But GL never did give this broad what she was itching for. I am tempted to suggest that the relationship between Dickles and Scott may have not been all it appeared to be. But then again, now that both GL and the Harlequin are retired, they may be snogging together and recalling that happily monstrous past.

THE FLASH was a play on only one of Superman's qualities—super-speed. Flash could run through solid objects because "they didn't have time to stop him", spin fast enough to make him invisible (but, never dizzy) and generally move like a jackrabbit after a jillrabbit. I particularly remember the involved time-travel stories this series spawned, especially in book-long stories in *All-Flash Quarterly*.

WONDER WOMAN was—and still is—patently feminist propaganda. Diana Prince sprang from a race of Amazons who lived on an island and raised their generations of girl children without ever seeing a man. (Brief pause). But Diana saw an aviator—Steve something or other—and decided there was no future in the Amazon Princess business—a dead-end job, and joined the Army to be near her man. In her Wonder Woman costume, she was as strong as an ox, able to catch bullets on her bracelets, spin a magic lasso that compelled obedience from the captured—including herself, operate a Mental Radio (with a TV screen) and fly an invisible airplane. In spite of her "love" for Steve (which she hid very well) I still think those Amazons were a bunch of Lesbians.

Superman and Batman are still around. DC has smoothed out some rough spots in the Superman character (like explaining his costume is made from super-cloth—I remember when Siegel and Shuster showed him fastening his cloak on with a safety pin) but Superman has lost all touch with reality. Today, Superman appears from the first panel to the end performing a never-ending series of miracles. In the old days, he kept his feet on the ground as Clark Kent in believable scenes of newspaper life to back his appearances as Superman, giving them meaning and verisimilitude.

*Tom Mix Comics* were given away for Ralston box-tops via radio, comic books and newspapers. They were half the size of the regular dime comics. They were 32 pages or the size of today's comics. What was probably a one shot effort lasted twelve issues. Like the Tom Mix radio program, they dealt with life on a modern ranch—the TM Bar—as it hasn't really been in fifty years. To the old west was added science fictional super weapons, airplanes, spies and gangsters. They had a certain charm, these comics, though never the quality the radio program obtained as written by George Lawther.

Probably the greatest comic book character of all appeared chiefly in newspapers—THE SPIRIT by Will Eisner. He created what might be called the E.C. style in comics—both the science fiction horror story type and the *Mad* satire. Eisner's drawing and narrative techniques undoubtedly revolutionized the whole industry. I firmly believe that The Spirit was vastly superior to Pogo, Li'l Abner, *Mad*, Steve Canyon, Peanuts, or any other comic with an ardent clique of supporters. To my mind, it had absolutely everything you could ask of the comic-strip media. Naturally, it is no longer published.

The Spirit was good. But as for the others, I suppose they seem better than today's effort only because they are seen down the long funnel to my childhood. They were brighter and gaudier. But that's probably all.

It must be a year since I've sat down and read a comic book. These days when I reach for a copy of Superman, it's the third word in the title of a play by G. B. Shaw.

I must be growing up, and I'm not at all sure it's a good thing.

- Jim Harmon



# RE-BIRTH

by Dick Lupoff

Logo by Maggie Curtis (Thompson)

From *Comic Art* #1 (April 1961)

First of all you must appreciate that Pat and I are impatient people. If it hadn't been for that it wouldn't have been written, the smoldering interest might never have been ignited into bright flame, and the whole thing might never have happened. Perhaps this is an overly egocentric interpretation of the events, but hear the story and judge for yourself. Yes, hear the story.

It started one day last summer. Pat and I were becoming increasingly active in science-fiction fandom; I had been a fan for almost ten years, but never a very active one—I had not, for instance, published a fanzine for eight years. Pat, on the other hand, was a neo, her mind just beginning to rot under the fannish influence of being married to me. We had, a few weeks earlier, collaborated with Big Walter Breen on a one-shot, and now, filled with the enthusiasm of first ink, Pat said to me, "Why don't we publish a fanzine."

Why not, indeed? I gave her the first three or four hundred reasons that popped into my head, convinced her thoroughly that fan publishing was an unrewarding waste of time, effort and money and finally agreed with her that we would publish a fanzine. After much discussing, after arriving at tentative decisions and repeatedly abandoning them, we were ready to begin. The fanzine's schedule was to be irregular; its contents general; its name, *Xero*.

But what has impatience to do with all this? It has the following to do with it. As anyone who has ever published a fanzine knows, there are several ways in which such a publication can be launched. First, you can appeal to friends and fannish acquaintances for material, waiting and scrounging until you've accumulated enough to make a substantial first issue, aided, perhaps, by appeals in other fanzines. Second, you can turn out a slim first issue yourself, appealing in it for material to make your succeeding works more substantial. Finally, if you are too impatient to let that much time pass before you begin to publish full-bodied editions, you can sit yourself down before the typewriter and *work*, friend, *work* at turning plain sheets of paper into chicken-scratched sheets of paper until you have yourself produced enough material for your first issue.

Now you see where impatience comes into the picture. Pat and I are impatient people. We wanted a fat first issue. And although we were supplied with a movie review by Harlan Ellison and had a few letters from people who had received our one-shot, we were still faced with the prospect of turning out some twenty to thirty pages of copy for *Xero* #1. That is, if we wanted it to be a fairly large

issue (we did) and if we were not willing to postpone publication while we gathered material (we were not).

So it was write, and we did. Pat is a reader, so she wrote two articles on books. I am an ~~average~~ ~~infant~~-avid comic book fan, and so I sat down and, for the first time in many revolutions, poured into my Smith-Corona all the nostalgic recollections I could garner with regard to my favorite comics hero, Captain Marvel. Eleven pages these recollections ran, and when it came time to put them on stencil I threw on a frontispiece, made the article, "The Big Red Cheese," the first of a series and christened the series "All in Color for a Dime."

Like, so what?

We finished the first issue in time to distribute copies at the Pittsburgh science fiction convention and whenever people had a chance to flip through a *Xero* in the course of a conversation, the next topic of talk was usually Captain Marvel and other old comics heroes.

The night of the costume ball, Pat and I showed up in our costumes: hastily devised Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel outfits. Mine was made from a set of long underwear and hers was nothing but a man's red T-shirt emblazoned with felt lightning, plus a yellow sash.

They were extremely popular costumes. Everyone from Doc Smith on down wanted to take our pictures. Why? Well, it wasn't that Pat and I are such popular fans. We have our friends, a growing (I hope) number of them, but we're not BNF's\* by a long shot, and certainly we don't deserve to be the center of a circle of admiration. It wasn't our costumes either, in the sense of their being elaborate (they weren't) or beautiful (they weren't) or even particularly revealing (Pat's was to a degree, but not spectacularly so). The only conclusion that can be drawn from our popularity is that it was not *us*, nor our costumes themselves, that were popular. It was Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel, momentarily embodied in us, that drew the admiration and applause.

Two months later the second *Xero* had been distributed. It contained another comic book article, this time by Ted White and illustrated beautifully by his wife Sylvia instead of clumsily by T.Hief, who had done the first. At the Philadelphia convention, some films from Pittsburgh were shown. During the costume ball sequence Pat and I appeared momentarily, in our Captain and Mary suits. Only for flash, mind you, and due to some petty ill will on the part of the narrator, conspicuously unidentified.

\*BNF = Big Name Fan





Illo by Larry Ivie

Yet several persons in the audience broke into applause again.

During this same general time-frame a number of fans have indicated a strong interest in comics and comics-oriented activity, ranging from the efforts of Tim Condit and Martha Atkins to form a Marvel Family Revival Association to Hal Lynch, Maggie Curtis and Don Thompson's efforts to start a general comics fandom, to simultaneous moves by Ted White and Don Thompson to publish comics fanzines.

Further, "All in Color" has been the most letter-provoking feature of *Xero*. Numerous people have requested copies, specifying that their motive is to obtain the comics articles, and if all the authors currently committed to write for the series come through with articles, the series will run well into 1962 before material runs out—at the present rate of publication. This may not happen, as the rate of publication may be increased by publishing *Xero* more often or by using more than one comics article per issue; nor, sadly, is commitment the same as production.

All of this activity means something, and unless I'm one very lousy inducer, it means that there is a great amount of interest in comic books, that it has been rolling along, usually unpublicized, showing through only occasionally in science fiction fandom and other peripheral areas of activity. Now maybe Charles Fort would say that the fall of 1960 was comic book time and that first article in *Xero* had nothing to do with the revival of interest. Certainly I would not claim that "The Big Red Cheese" created the interest. But I do believe

that the article served as a catalyst for all the latent interest which had been trying so long to break through to the surface.

But whether that article was a cause or a mere coincidence, I am immensely pleased to see the revival of interest in comic books, for two reasons. One of them, obviously, stems from my own interest in comics. I feel a strong nostalgic attraction to them, and the renewal of interest in them gives this feeling on my part a chance to come forth and be active and, more important, to be shared and even, yes, admired instead of having to be hidden. "You still read comic books? You, a grown-up man, a college graduate, a former army officer, an intelligent business man? *You still read COMIC BOOKS????!!*"

How much of that talk have *you* ever had to listen to? How much before you started regarding your interest as a slightly shameful minor perversion? How much before you started *sneaking secret comic books*? How much before you try to *stop* being interested, try to tell yourself: "I've *outgrown* that stuff!" Sure you have. Haven't you?

And then one day you decide to publish a fanzine, and you decide to write some of the material yourself and, full of fear and trembling, you take this *thing*, this love of old comics, out of its secret hiding place and show it in your fanzine and the readers *love* it!

That's why I'm glad to see this interest in old comics. That's one reason.

The other reason is a lot more respectable, I guess, and in all honesty it's not the main one. Although in talking to non-lovers of old comics it's the one most likely to be accepted with only half a sneer instead of a whole one. And that is the fact that before our very eyes a whole branch of popular literature has come and gone and it has drawn hardly a glance from any historian of what we read. Would you believe it, I went to the New York Public Library—yeah, the famous one with the lions in front, one of the world's biggest—and tried to research some old comics. There's nothing there! Oh, they have Dr. Wertham's infamous book and a couple of little clippings against censorship from the circa 1940, by M. C. Gaines, about how comics are made.

But there is not one page, not one word, about what the comics were really like. They came in the thirties, their golden age was in the forties. They declined in the fifties with only one late-blooming flower, the EC line, really coming forth in that decade.

Oh, there are still a few comics around. There is even a minor renaissance in being at this very time. But the comics of today are not the comics of twenty years ago and, even if they should prosper again (as I hope and doubt that they will) they will not be of the same breed as their ancestors. The world has changed and the economics of publishing have changed, the line has mutated and will never be the same any more than a revived dime novel would be the same as the dime novels of the turn of the century or a revived pulp the same as the pulps of the thirties.

The comic as we knew it, the comic book that published hundreds of titles, thousands of issues, millions of copies, has disappeared. Almost without a trace.

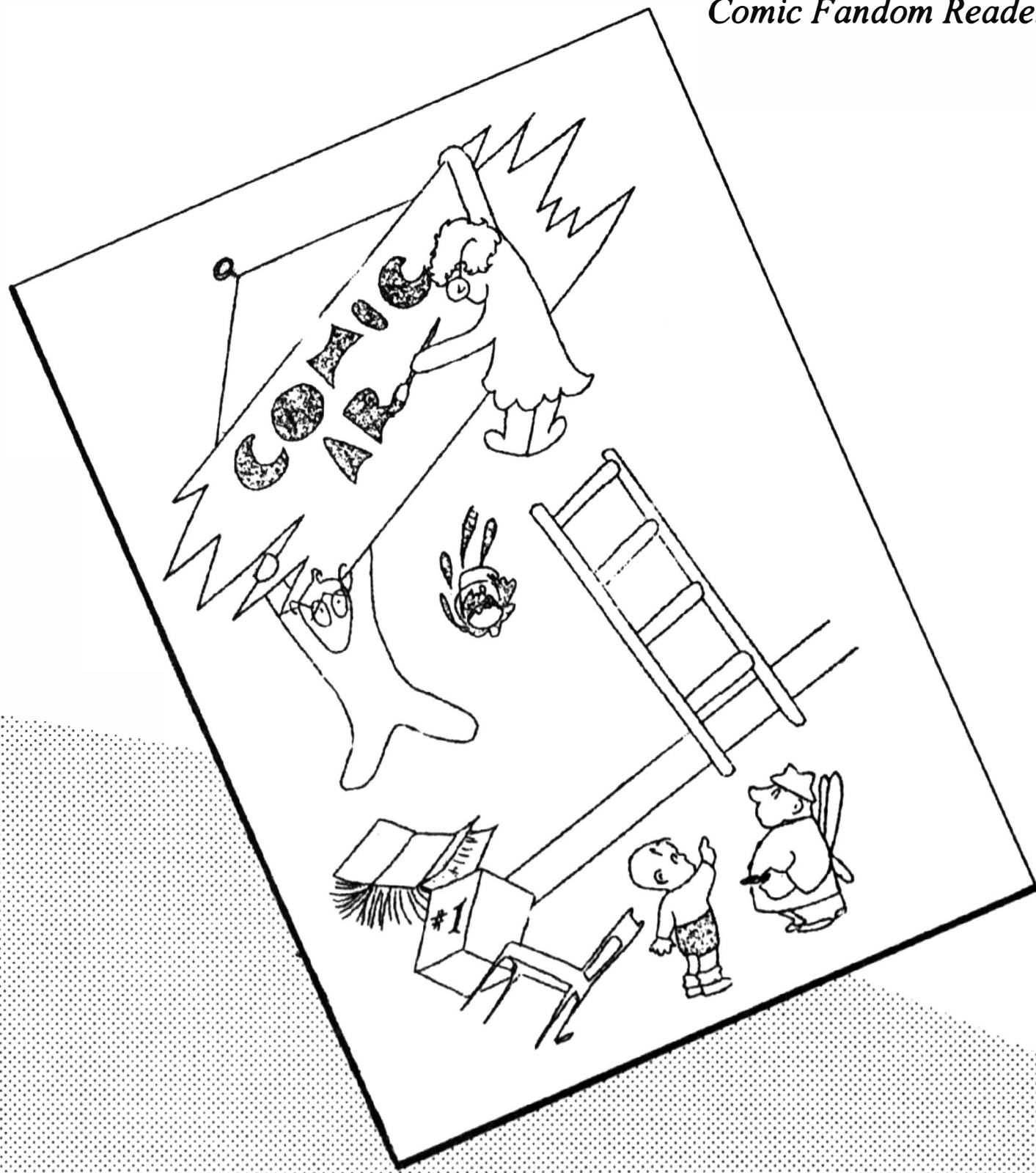
Now, this is not the first time that a major branch of, goddam it, *yes, literature* has come and been of immense influence and importance and then been nearly lost to history as soon as it was lost to memory. It has happened at least twice before, to the two branches of literature I mentioned a couple of paragraphs ago, the dime novel and the pulp.

A whole generation of kids grew up on the dime novels. Nick Carter and Frank Reade and Merriwell of Yale and the Boys in Blue and Gray, and then it wasn't dime novel time any more and they died out or mutated. How many millions of kids read them? How many hours of thrills and inspiration did they provide? But then they were gone, and it was almost, *almost* as if they had never been.

Just in the nick of time, ah, how appropriate that was, just in the nick of time a few people with a nostalgic tug after the dime novels started to buy them up from used book stores, started digging them out of the attics and woodsheds, researching and checking and indexing and cataloguing, and the dime novel was saved from limbo, which is, after all, a fate worse than death.

But does it really matter that the dime novel was saved? Does it matter what the kids of our grandparents'





*The cover of Comic Art #1 featured Maggie Curtis's self-caricatures of herself and husband-to-be Don Thompson ... along with Characters from Barnaby.*

*Comic Art #1 and Alter-Ego #1 appeared within days of each other in 1961.*

generation read, does it matter what color the dinosaurs were? Don't expect an argument here. Either you care or you don't care. I care. A lot of us care. Chance is that you care, or you wouldn't be reading this magazine.

But back to history.

Along came the pulps; not unlikely they were the mutated children of the dime novels. Again they burgeoned. Again stands and stores blossomed in colorful profusion as bright-wrapped blotting-paper carried thrills of the western plains, the burning sands, the rolling seas, the roaring streets, the sizzling sheets and...remember?...the black deeps of space. The whole phenomenon was repeated. Hundreds of thousands of words were ground out every week for a never-sated audience willing to buy its coins' worth of adventure, suspense and romance.

And then it wasn't pulp time any more. And the pulp started to disappear from human memory. And

again a few people, the faithful collectors, the fidious fans, went through the dime novel act again. And the pulps were saved as well.

And then came the comics. First newspaper reprints and then some original material, but they never amounted to much until Superman came along. But once he did, there was no stopping the comic book. They followed in herds. And let's face it, whether it's pleasant to do so or not; most of them were formula junk. They were unimaginative; they were populated with stock figures mouthing stock lines as they acted out stock situations with stock conclusions. But so were the dimers and so were the pulps.

There were also some exceptions. There was, for instance, the original Superman story itself. Not the version that's been retold and revised and mangled almost beyond recognition, but the story as it was original told by Siegel and Shuster. There were some fine imaginative

stories in the Flash and Green Lantern series, there was the Hawkman and the Justice Society of America. There was the young Mickey Spillane cutting his sadistic teeth on the Sub-Mariner. There was the arch satire of Captain Marvel.

And even the bad ones... Who can deny the importance and the interest of Wonder Woman, premier purveyor of perversion, spreading the bondage fetish lesbian doctrines of, oddly, her two *male* feminist creators, William Moulton Marsden and H. G. Peters?

All of this, wiped out, gone forever, as if it had never been. *All-Star Comics* once polled its readers on a matter and got over 10,000 letters! Can John Campbell do that? For that matter, can the *New York Times*?

Yes, I enjoy old comics, but it's a lot more than that. I *care* about old comics. Old comics *matter*—they *count*. And anyone planning projects to save them can count on me.

-- Dick Lupoff



Turn to Page 112 for an in-depth interview with Dick and Pat Lupoff.



No. 11

# WONDERWORLD COMICS

Clinging to the wing-tip  
The Flame  
unleashes a  
blast of fire.

64  
PAGES  
IN FULL  
COLOR

12 Complete  
Features

S of the Navy  
per Sleuth of the Orient  
Robinson

SPARK STEVENS  
of the Navy

K-51  
Spies at War

PATTY C  
Newsreel I





## NUMBER EIGHT IN THE SERIES “ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME”

Somewhere among the backwaters and bayous of the comic world must stand an old false-fronted shack, roofless, broken-windowed, almost tumble-down now, overgrown with weeds and musty with decay. Hanging precariously above the sagging front door will be a faded and checkered sign: *Fox Feature Syndicate*, Victor S. Fox, Owner & Prop. If you go inside, pushing your way through the weeds and the empty cola bottles and mildewed premium coupons and broken cameras and rusty cap guns, you will find heaped against one of the far corners, and interrupted now and again by taller, wider, *Esquire*-sized magazines, a ragged stack of old comics—none of them well preserved, not even the newest issues. In fact, if you thumb through them, you’ll notice a peculiarity of the climate here. Only the older magazines are in passable condition; the newer ones are the ones that smell of decay.

By now, you’ll probably have seen enough to satisfy you. You’ll edge your way back to the door and—watching the sign doesn’t drop on you—you’ll shake your cuffs out and then you’ll go on your way.

You shouldn’t. You should stay a while. Something important happened here ...

## “The Education of VICTOR FOX”

By Richard Kyle

From *Xero* #8 (1962)







Who's who at the bar-b-cue: With Green Mask looking on, "News" Blake (with pipe) and "News" Doaks (with cigarette) decide who'll be the Mask's aide. Pipe-smoking Blake clearly has the inside track. In the background, Samson and Joan Mason, Blue Beetle's girl friend, return from a firewood hunting expedition. While Blue Beetle jealously awaits Joan, Domino (clutching a bottle of pop from a case he's just filched at a deserted soft drink stand nearby), the Green Mask's boy assistant, miffed because the Beetle has been upstaging them in *Mystery Men Comics*, tries to conk him on the head with his boomerang. As usual, it goes astray, and Green Mask is going to get

## I.

In April 1939, just a few days short of one full year after Superman had picked up his first automobile, Fox Publications, Inc. issued *Wonder Comics*, the pilot model of the Fox chain, shortly to become *Wonderworld*. By the end of 1941 Victor Fox was publishing a string of nine comic books, had placed one of his heroes on radio coast to coast, was competing monthly with *Esquire* in a men's magazine featuring such writers as Jerome Weidman, Chester B. Himes, and Irving Wallace, and was energetically promoting a "new thrill" soft drink containing vitamin B<sub>1</sub>.

Offhand, you'd say Victor S. Fox was a success.

*Wonderworld* certainly was, anyhow. At a time when most comic book art was cartoonish *Wonderworld's* feature, the Flame, was rendered with a skill and style that has seldom been surpassed—maybe it never has. And mixed in with the usual

hack work of the period were such strips as "Yarko, the Great---Master of Magic," Spark Stevens—of the Navy," and "Dr. Fung—Master Sleuth of the Orient," all substantial secondary features.

None of them were great characters, and only the Flame was a memorable one—but the other day, when I came upon them after an absence of more than twenty years, I recalled each one with a fidelity that nostalgia alone cannot evoke. A world that is gone came back to me.

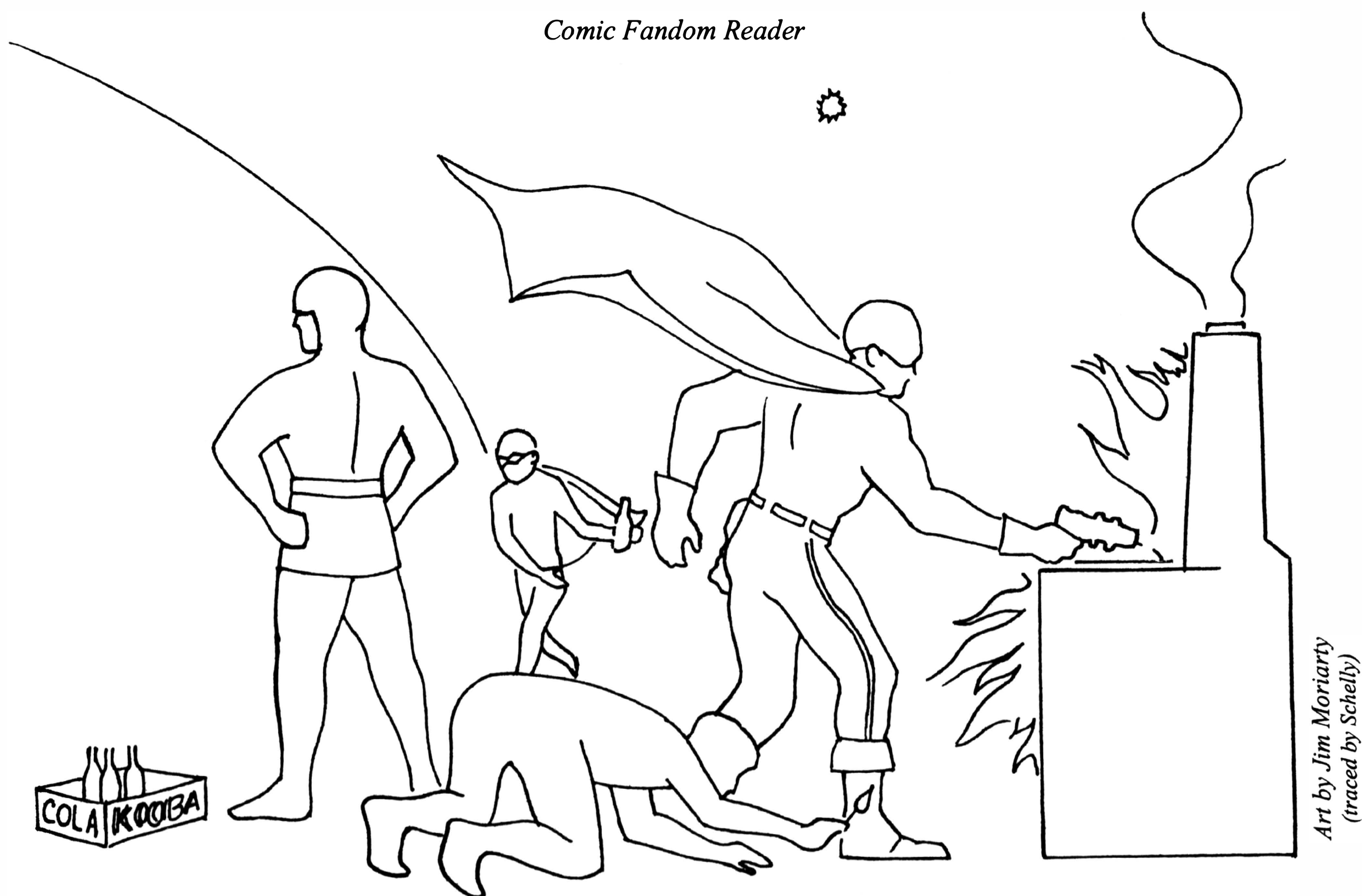
It was the eleventh issue, March 1940 ... The cover, of course, was by the illustrator of "The Flame." His name was given as Basil Berold, and because it is a curious name, it may have been his real one.\* (Most of the pseudonymously drawn Fox strips were signed by good old American-sounding names, no matter what the artists really called themselves. Floyd Kelly, Charles Nicholas, and Arthur

\*Actually, the great Lou Fine.

Dean were, at one time or another, actually George Tuska, Larry Antonette, and S. R. Powell.) As usual, the cover was marvelously complex and beautifully rendered.

In the upper-left, the Flame, clad in his skin-tight yellow uniform and the distinctive red mask that fitting snugly over his eyes and his, his red, calf-length boots striding in the air, his red cape billowing behind him, dangles by one gauntleted hand from a chain thrown over the side of his speeding airplane as it roars through the logotype. In his free right hand, drawn from its red, cylindrical holster, is the massive Flame Gun. It spews out a great comber of fire at two enemy soldiers and at the fanciful but grimly realistic cannon-sized weapon rearing up between them, its stubby muzzle trained full on the Flame's chest and on the flame symbol there. One of the men, in the cap and brass of an officer, futilely levels a ponderous hand gun on the Flame's mid-section; the other, crouching desperately below the





it in the neck again. At the barbecue, the Flame, his Flame Gun set on full automatic, is attempting with little success to get the charcoal burning. Meantime Rex Dexter of Mars, tempted beyond human endurance, prepares to give the flame a hotfoot. That bright star shining above the Flame heralds Stardust the Super Wizard, who is traveling as usual on highly accelerated light waves. Stardust is in a quandary. He has perceived Dexter's dastardly intent but he left his Hotfoot Extinguishing Ray at home, and his all-purpose Fire Extinguishing Ray would put out the barbecue, as well. Decisions. What's for barbecue? Fox, of course ...

searing fire, attempts—frantically—to manipulate the controls of the weapon. In the background, other soldiers, infantrymen, race toward him across the smoking, barbwired battlefield, rifles at the ready—and a metallic-blue enemy plane circles in toward the kill.

And, naturally, the cover caption reads: "Clinging to the wing-tip the Flame unleashes a blast of fire." Well, they managed to be half-right this time, anyhow ...

The back cover is almost as interesting. It's the Johnson Smith & Co. advertisement. A lot of times that ad meant the difference between putting down a dime for a comic book or waiting a couple of weeks or a month and borrowing it from a friend, or—if he hadn't bought it, either, because the ad was old or not there at all—trading for it two for one at Chuck's or Dave's or Chester's Magazine Exchange down on the avenue, where in that heyday of the

pulps they had every kind of magazine you could name. (Including the *Spicy* series of pulps, which Chick or Dave or Chester wouldn't let you look at.)

DIVING u-boat SUBMARINE ... Only \$1.19 ... Powerful ... Dives or Rides on & Under Water ... Adjustable Diving Fins ... Ice Breaker Rudder ... Adjustable Ballast Chamber ... Realistic Gun ... Conning Tower & Periscope ... Grey Color with Trimmings ... 10½ Inches Long ... A real beauty ... Zips Along ON Top Of the Water, Will Dive or Raise Itself and Travels Under Water By Its Own Powerful Motor ... All Metal ...

FIELD GLASSES ... 25¢ ... Live CHAMELEON ... BUILD FLYING PLANE FROM CHEAP PARTS ... Fly Your Own Plane! Books of plans telling how to build a low priced plane from junk yard parts. 10 lesson Flying Course Ground School. Price 25¢.

Johnson Smith & Co. would sell you anything your childish mind could

conceive of. And in the very small print some things it couldn't. DANCE HALL TO WHITE SLAVERY ... Thousands of white girls are trapped into white slavery every year. Explains in vivid detail true stories of devilish schemes to lure innocent young girls. Price 25¢. LIVES OF HOTCHA CHORUS GIRLS ... 10¢. Yes, the Johnson Smith & Co. advertisement was always in the back of your head when you plunked down your dime. A new ad must have been looked forward to eagerly by every publisher in the business ...

The inside front cover listed the winners of a recent contest—the early Fox comics had contests at the drop of a beany—and Norma Richerson, Box 86, Hardesty, Oklahoma was the first prize winner. Across from this announcement was the first page of "The Flame" ...

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The Flame's splash panel, embellished with a medium-size "The" in script and a huge "Flame" in a vaguely Eastern style of lettering, a noncommittal "by" and an Old English "Basil Berold"—as well as a minor forest fire of flames and a bust drawing of the Flame himself—contains the legend:

Greedy for power and territory, King Rodend, ruler of the tiny Balkan country of Kalnar, sends his forces against the peaceful kingdom of Dorna, an act that threatens to throw the entire world into war ...

And then the story begins. It is not the usual Flame story of giant metal man-carrying spiders attacking New York and climbing through the city as though it were a collection of twigs, or of an invasion of super-tanks capable of boring their way through any obstruction; this one tells of his origin as well—and even the eight-panel page of the time (today's six panel page was not yet standard) allows little elbow room for the usual dramatic complications. I'm going to tell it to you, however, for it could serve as a virtual template for the early Fox comics. And what fascinated us, in another time, should always interest us, now.

At intelligence headquarters in the capital of Dorna two uniformed figures pace the floor: an elderly, white-burnsided man, tall and erect; a young and beautiful blonde girl. Wearily, the man turns to his companion. "I'm afraid, Maria, that our forces haven't a chance."

"Why? Because of Rodend's fire cannons?"

"Exactly! Nothing can stop them! Asbestos burns like thunder before them."

"I know just the one to stop them." Maria clenches her fists. "The Flame!"

"The Flame? What do you mean?"

"Listen," Maria says, "I'll tell you his story..."

Twenty-five years ago in the Chinese city of Ichang, close by the Yangtze River, a son was born to the Reverend Arnold Charteris and his wife. In season, the river became a flood, and Charteris, knowing the end was near, placed his son in a basket, put a small locket around his neck, and

set his makeshift cradle upon the water.

After hours of tossing and bobbing on the swirling current, the tiny basket, swept swiftly along through the raging storm, suddenly disappeared into a small cavern opening. Into the murky depths it sped, finally coming to a country overrun with exotic flowers and plants growing in wild confusion. "I hear a baby's cry! It comes from that basket in the river! By Tao! It's a baby! Sent by the gods to succeed our recently deceased Grand Lama!" Picking up the foundling, the Buddhist priest hurried to his lamasery. "Look, brethren! Heaven has given us a new leader!"

The child grew to manhood. For hours, he jousting and wrestled with the other youths, strengthening his naturally powerful body; and in feats of magic, too, his prowess far excelled that of his teachers.

One day, a band of explorers, one of them Maria, stumbled upon the Utopian valley. "May I see that locket you are wearing?" a visitor asked the High Lama. "W-why, it contains a picture of the Reverend Charteris! Remember him, James? He was drowned in the flood—say, this must be his son!"

Two hours later, after they had spoken to the priest who found the child, young Charteris was called to the old man's study. "Your place is in the outer world, my son! You must go! Tonight I will reveal to you my most potent secret of magic—tonight, you will be given the power over flame!"

That night a great procession filed its way from the palace, led by the son of the Reverend Charteris, still clad in the blue robes of the High Lama. Behind him, at the head of the train of monks, the old priest walked, bearing a golden ceremonial cushion. Striding between two jade pillars, from whose crests burned twin white flames, they ascended to a broad marble dais lying at the feet of a massive, towering green Buddha. The priest knelt upon the golden cushion and gestured, and as layers of smoke began to form in the air about them, young Charteris removed his robe of office and stood waiting for his trial and investiture.

The old man raised his arms. Charteris—clothed in white fire, entwined in the layers of curling smoke—soared upward above the face of the huge idol. Transfigured, he grew

larger and larger, until he dwarfed the priest below him. Green rays of energy burst from the staring Buddha, and for a time, Charteris became one with the flame.

Then it was over. Power greater than any other man's was his. He was the master of flame... The next day the old man and his pupil exchanged farewells. "My son, you leave us armed with potent mystic powers—use them for good!"

"It will be so!"

Maria concludes her story. "So you see, the Flame is the one man who can help us! He will do as I ask...."

Suddenly the door is thrown open and a tall, muscular man strides into the room. "Flame!" Maria cries.

"I came as soon as I received your message."

Told of the power of Rodend's fire cannon and Dorna's inability to stand before them, the Flame agrees to help. Running out to his plane, he leaves for the front immediately.

Small fire guns are brought up as he dives over the trenches, and the enemy attempts to burn him from the sky. The Flame passed through unharmed. Fastening a chain to the fuselage, he climbs out on the wing of his hurtling plane. "Here's where you get a dose of your own medicine!" he cries, and grasping the chain, he goes over the side.

The Flame hedgehops across the battlefield, swinging from the end of the chain, and Rodend's soldiers begin to panic. The great Fire Cannon is brought into action: "Nothing can resist that!" The Flame dives toward it, and as the monstrous weapon roars, his own handgun looses a bolt of fire at its muzzle. And: "unable to find an outlet, the searing flames expand, and the gun is blown to bits."

Landing in the midst of the smoking remains, the Flame lashes out with his fists. Rodend's soldiers, dazed and frightened, cry for mercy, raising their arms in surrender. Soon the soldiers of Dorna take charge of his captives, and the Flame wings his way toward the headquarters of the cruel King Rodend...

In his chambers, Rodend, a Hitlerian figure with a small moustache and a wild tangle of hair falling across his forehead, broods over his war maps. An aged servant enters.

"You rang, sire?"



"Poke up that fire—it's getting chilly in here."

As the old man stirs up the burning logs, the Flame, arms crossed over his chest, materializes from out of the crackling blaze. Rodend and his man-servant fall back in fright.

"What do you want?" screams Rodend, drawing his heavy automatic pistol.

"I have come to give you your due!" The Flame tears Rodend's pistol from him as though he were an awkward child, and like a pneumatic hammer, his gauntleted fist pounds at King Rodend's face.

"Spare me! I beg of you. I will do anything you say, anything!"

"All right, here's what I want you to do...."

Early the next morning at intelligence headquarters in Dorna... "Maria! Maria! King Rodend has ceased fighting and...."

"I know—here's a note from the Flame: 'Glad to have helped. Don't hesitate to call on me when you need help to overcome evil....'"

And the story is over.

In those nine Osterized pages, blending together chunks and pieces of Shangri-la, the story of Moses, the theory of reincarnation, technologically isolated super-scientific weapons, mythical European kingdoms, magic, and mysticism, are a whole dead world. The world before World War II. Today, the story seems uninspired and centuries away; then, it evoked an array of aging but powerful and contemporary symbols, our final compromise with the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and its simultaneous belief in science and magic, democracy and autocracy, romanticism and realism—and in the symbol of the Flame it evoked, too, less gracefully, less felicitously than Jerry Siegel's conception of Superman and his origin, the new and idealistic symbol of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It is easy to laugh at the superficial, paper-doll images of the men who ran around in public in their long underwear yelling "Up, up, and away!" and "Shazam!" and other inanities at the top of their lungs or sniffing hard water formulas or driving Batmobiles around as though they were Model A Fords or living "in the caverns beneath the New York World's Fair"—or hedgehopping battlefields dangling from the bellies of airplanes while trying to pot the

soldiers with revolver-sized Flame Guns.

But it is not so easy to laugh at the hearts of these paper dolls. Most, like Raggedy Ann's, had "I Love You" written on them.

It may be that the popular literature of the '30s and '40s is unique in history, for from the pulp magazines' the Shadow and Doc Savage, through to Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel and the Flame, the heroes fought for idealistic beliefs of justice and right, and not for personal profit. Not even the folk heroes of the past can make that claim—the taint of personal interest clings to almost all of them. And it is the simplified world of the comic strip where symbols can artistically replace representative realism more easily and convincingly than any other story-telling medium, in which the Idealist reached his flower.

Idealists are sometimes funny. Idealism never is. The measure of those brightly costumed refugees from the Charles Atlas ads is not their preposterous appearance, but their symbol as men with the power to satisfy any desire, satisfying their desires by doing good. It was naïve of them, perhaps; I don't think it was childish.

The costume heroes brought another unique thing to the kids sitting out on the back stoop at home—or in the pool of shade behind the school cafeteria at lunch time—while they read comic books and talked comic books: Liberation. Mythologies and fairy tales have always placed a penalty on the possession of supernormal powers by men. Icarus fell. Cinderella tripped. But Superman never fell—and if he did, what difference would it make? Billy Batson might trip, sure, but a quick "Shazam" would get him out of trouble. For the first time in mass literature, physical liberation from the confines of the ordinary brought reward to the hero, rather than disaster.

Coulton Waugh, in his history of the comic strip, takes up the masked costume hero and wonders: Why in the United States of America should "justice be hooded"? Like many others before and since, Coulton Waugh missed the point.

Charlie Chaplin, in his most successful pictures, played a noble and honorable man who was a victim of circumstance. A king disguised by

nature and a cruel society as a tramp, his low station in life and his inadequate body hid his real worth. The great pathos of those pictures was achieved by suddenly revealing that the wretched and laughable little figure on the screen was a man, just like you and me, who was doing the best he could in the shape and circumstances life had imposed on him. *City Lights*, perhaps Chaplin's finest motion picture, tells of his love for a blind girl, and of his efforts to obtain money for an operation on her eyes—even though he knows that when she sees him she may reject him. For the blind girl only knows him for what he really is, for his kindness, his goodness, his innate nobility. She does not see the false picture of him the world sees and laughs at as he struggles through one ordeal after another to obtain the money her eyes need.

Trash, too, can use the materials of art. It is no accident that the Shadow was Lamont Cranston, rather than Lamont Cranston the Shadow. Nor is it an accident that Clark Kent was really Superman in disguise. They were the prototypes of their kind and the most nearly perfect in conception, and their message was not that this ordinary man concealed an extraordinary man, but that this extraordinary man concealed an ordinary man—that the world did not commonly see the real person behind Clark Kent's glasses or Cranston's urbane but not unusual appearance. The costume and masks revealed the real individual by hiding the superficialities of his day-to-day aspect, just as the girl's blindness revealed the true character of the little tramp.

"The Flame" was not a great strip—it was Berold's marvelous gift for anatomy and garish realism that sustained it—and in its attribution of mystic as well as scientific powers to the Flame, the symbolism was weakened; nonetheless, when you were not quite ten and the spirit of things counted far more than their style or—even—their content, it was something you looked forward to.

It is far easier to criticize art than trash. Art appeals to the emotions and the intellect; trash appeals to one or the other, but never to both. Yet the perennial success of the over-intellectualized trash that passes for "literary" fiction and the enduring popularity of the over-emotionalized



trash of writers like Gene Stratton-Porter, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack Woodford, Zane Gray, and Mickey Spillane (and Chester Gould and Jerry Siegel) demand understanding; for sometimes the spirit of first-rank trash is more important than the content of second-rank art. And since with trash it is the spirit of the thing that counts—in the end, the only thing that counts—the customary standards of art criticism can never apply.

If we want to see “The Flame” and the others for what they really were, we must understand, as we understood then, what they tried to be, not what they actually achieved, nor what we believe art might have made of them....

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Magicians were very big in those days too. There was Ibis the Invincible in *Whiz Comics*, and Zatara in *Action*—and Yarko the Great, who came right after “The Flame” in *Wonderworld*.

Yarko had a time of it. He was usually pretty well drawn himself, but he often had to associate with as ill-drawn a crew of rascals as you could find anywhere. Even the police were out of proportion in the March issue, and I imagine it really offended Yarko, a fastidious dresser and a man who clearly believed a gentlemen’s right arm should be as long as his left (but no longer). Apparently, Yarko himself was drawn by one artist—a man with a speaking acquaintance with anatomy—and the rest of the strip was filled in by whoever was handy. I’d guess it was a big month for Yarko when his own artist would illustrate the rest of the strip, too.

Despite his name, Yarko was an American-looking fellow, tall, with agreeable but otherwise undistinguished features. He completely lacked the department store dummy appearance of Mandrake, or the reputed ugliness of Warlock the Wizard, in *Nickel Comics*. As I said, Yarko was a fastidious dresser. He wore a white tie and tails, a red cape, and an ochre turban with a blood-red gem in the center of it.



Yarko

When he went to bed he took off the cape. He was a rather fastidious talker, too. In this episode, “Captain Debit of the Homicide Bureau” calls on Yarko, and Yarko says, “Hello. To what may I credit your unexpected visit?”

Well, Yarko may have been a magician, all right, but he was no seer.

It seems an East Indian Seventh Son of a Seventh Son is attempting to find two jewels—the twin jewels of blood—whose possession will give him reign over all India. One of the stones is traced to a gang of American thieves. After three or four of them are found dead, Captain Debit decides it’s time to request Yarko’s help because, “I am the laughing stock of the town.” Yarko takes a look at the bodies and goes home to bed. After he has taken off his cape and gotten under the covers, white tie, tails, turban and all, and turned out the lights, two East Indians attack him. It appears the other Twin Jewel of Blood—the Ada-La-Hoda—is in his turban. Yarko kicks them out of bed, knocking one head first into a large vase conveniently located at the foot. Then, through magic, he turns the other one upside down and makes him spin like a top until the police arrive.

A few months later, the Seventh Son of the Seventh Son gathers his people together once again. He is no quitter: “The famed Yarko has sent us the Ada-La-Hida, but he still possesses its sister. We must get it!”

Yarko, who has returned the Ada-La-Hida because the sight of it killed any but the rightful owner, suddenly appears in a vision. “True!” he intones, “You are the Seventh Son of the Seventh Son of the Order of Aribah, but you have erred in your ways, and so your sire hath given you only the Ada-La-Hida! He entrusted me with the other which I wear on my turban. Were you to be given the Ada-La-Hoda, you would become very powerful... Power turns the heads of men. There would be eternal tumult in India. Make no further attempts to gain it!”

The Seventh Son of the Seventh Son of the Order of Aribah looks properly convinced. Maybe because the vision of Yarko is as big as a house.

Actually, this is a rather tame Yarko adventure. He once took on an army of men conceived up out of mandrake roots, and wrestled to the death with the astral body of a black magician while they were both hundreds of feet tall. Unlike the other comic book magicians, Yarko dealt largely in the metaphysical and the mystic, rather than in “simple” magic, and if the content was not often distinguished, the spirit was....

After Yarko came “Shorty Shortcake.” “Shorty” was signed by “Jerry Williams” who was actually Klaus Nordling, the artist for “Spark Stevens” later on in the book. Although Shorty was drawn in the animated cartoon style of the time—a huge head, with coat-button eyes and shiny Rudolph Valentino haircut, a tiny body, and arms and legs like lengths of garden hose—there is a liveliness that comes from an understanding of the comic book medium. (If Basil Berold had a major fault, it was that he was primarily an illustrator, rather than a comic strip artist.)

Although you’d never guess it, Shorty is in Guatemala this month on the trail of Professor Gnu, who is a very sore, if not actually mad, scientist. Gnu has invented an “H<sub>2</sub>O Magnet” which draws “all of the waters of the countryside” to his door. Shorty, who doesn’t want to pay a dollar a glass for a drink, heists the magnet, nearly drowns in the flood that follows, is captured by Gnu’s oversized carrier pigeon (“Carrier Pigeon - 40 x Normal Size - Product of Professor



Gnu" the sign on the birdcage reads), is almost eaten by a thirty foot earthworm, saves himself by gulping a little of the professor's Enlarger Fluid, busts out of Gnu's laboratory, grows a mile high, is struck by lightning, and rained on until he shrinks (that's what Professor Gnu needed all that water for), and finally soars off in a glider presented in appreciation for his accomplishments ("Gee thanks," says Shorty)....

"Patty O'Day – Newsreel Reporter" follows. It was a nothing strip: "Death to ze American!" "Come on, I'll lick the bunch of you!" "He's unconscious!" "Good! Too bad he has fallen down this well! Ha-ha!" "You murdering beasts!" "We only follow orders!" ....

Then, on page 32, where the modern comic book peters out with an ad for a blackhead extractor or a genuine cardboard "Frontier Cabin big enough for 2-3 kids" (\$1.00 a cabin, 5 for \$4.00), *Wonderworld* presented "Dr. Fung – Master Sleuth of the Orient." The credit says "Arthur Dean"; actually it was drawn by S. R. Powell, an old timer who took over the "Shadow" comic strip from Vernon V. Greene and who is still active today.

Dr. Fung was a small, bald man, with a white mustache and goatee, and glasses that fell down over his nose. He was aided by Dan Barrister, a blond American considerably taller than Dr. Fung, who wore calf-length boots, blue riding breeches and jacket, a white shirt and a black necktie. In this episode, Dan had quite a time with that necktie. Right after a tough fight he had to strip it off and open his collar at the throat—to show he'd really exercised (kind of like old time vaudeville dancers who used to throw off their coats and roll up their sleeves to indicate they *really* meant business)—and then get it tied again and that tough collar button fastened again before the next panel.

"Invited by his old friend, Alzea Rapkut, to inspect a mysterious pit," the flash panel reads, "Dr. Fung takes Dan Barrister to his house in ancient Persia..."

Well, you'd know it. The hole's been there for years, but the minute they look over the side, "by Allah's beard!" (as Alzea Rapkut puts it) the earth heaves and cracks open, throwing Dr. Fung and Dan Barrister headlong into the pit. They fall for hours. Then: "Dan! We're slowing up! We're beginning to float down! Someone is behind this!" Finally they fall into an enormous glass jar and are seized by green, ape-like creatures with suckers for fingers and built-in unicycles for legs who bottle them up in glass cylinders and ship them through an overgrown department store pneumatic tube.

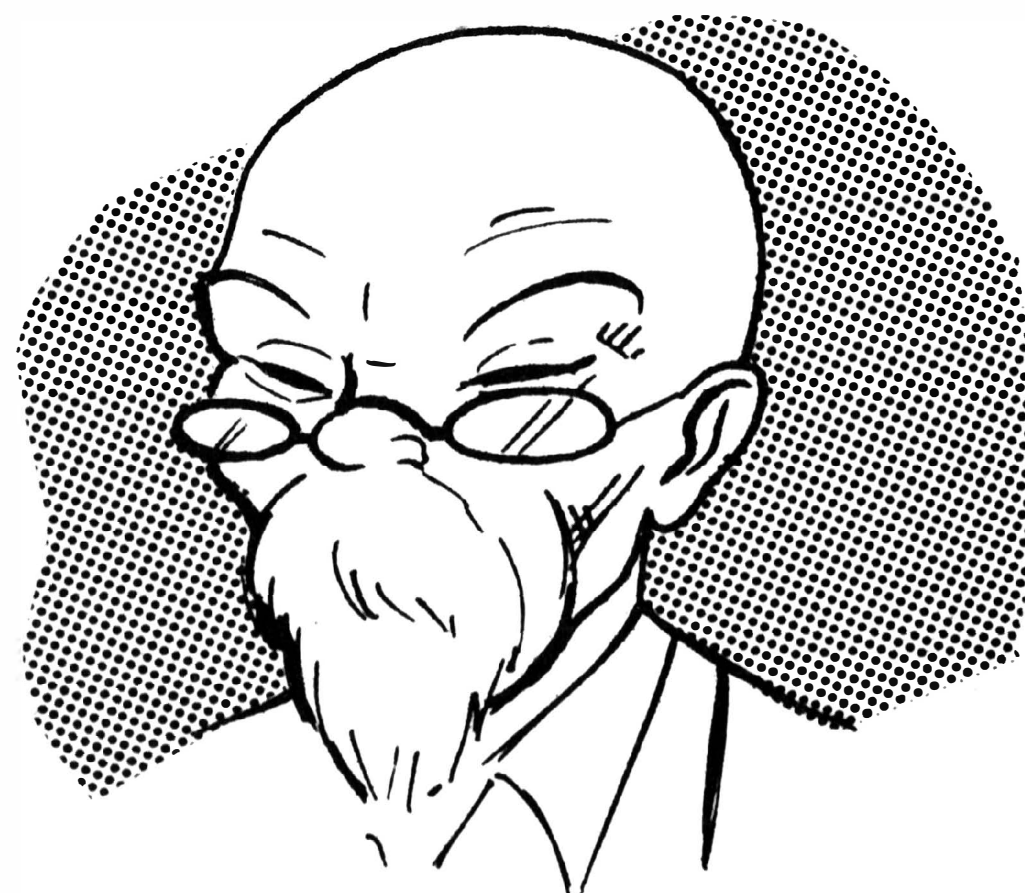
At the end of the trip, standing before her throne, is a good-looking blonde girl in red shorts and halter. "Earth people!! At last my prayers are answered!! Please take me back to the land where I was born. I'm sick of being queen of these horrible creatures!" Her name is Rima, and she fell into a seemingly bottomless ravine years before while exploring the Himalayas with her father.

"Can't you speak louder, girl?" Dr. Fung asks, "I can hardly hear you!"

She doesn't dare to, though, because—although she can whisper in double exclamation points—the green things are very sensitive to noise.

Suddenly: "Dan, look!" cries Dr. Fung. "Shout! Quick man! Scream your loudest!"

Dan screams, "He" claps his hands over his ears, and they race for the "suction elevator" that brought them—Rima is going to reverse the "gravitation machinery" controlling it.



Dr. Fung

At the last second "He" dives into the shaft, too, and is carried to the surface, unable to gain on them because "the pressure is even." As Dr. Fung leaps from the mouth of the pit he calls to his waiting friend Rapkut (a patient man, evidently) for a gun, and kills the monster as it emerges.

"Back to my own people at last!" says Rima, and then she clears up any doubts about her age. "I was only six years old when I fell down there fifteen years ago! How can I ever thank you?"

"Your happiness is enough!" says Dr. Fung, who, despite his vigor, is apparently too old for the game. Barrister, however, is up on his addition, and knows what a girl's talking about when she tells him she's over eighteen. His hand reaches for her waist.

A psychiatrist might reach for his notebook.

"Ted Maxon, The Phantom Rider," by Cecelia Munson is next. The source of Miss Munson's inspiration is revealed in the closing panels: "Who are you, mister?" "Who am I? I am the Phantom Rider, the friend of those in trouble! But my real name must always remain a secret." The Phantom Rider adjusts his mask, and "with a 'Hoof it, Streak!' he is gone—to reappear when needed...." Tex was shortchanged all around. He didn't even have a kemo sabe...

In those days almost every comic book ran a two-page humor strip. In *Wonderworld* it was "Don Quixote in Modern Times" and it was about Don Quixote in modern times...

Klaus Nordling, like most of the early comic book artists, was no wonder with a pen; unlike most of them, with his cartoonist's feel for exaggerated action and foreshortening, he made up for his lack of finish. His strips *moved*. Although he was never in—say—Jack Cole's league here, his comic book sense was superior to any other Fox artist, except, possibly, Dick Briefer.

For *Wonderworld* (aside from "Shorty Shortcake," which was done in his usual style), he drew "Spark Stevens of the Navy," an adventure strip paralleling the service movies Hollywood had been making for years: two women-chasing, action-hungry, free-wheeling, light-hearted buddies who were always beating up on spies—when they weren't beating up on each other over a girl. Nordling did the job well. And reading them today is much more pleasant than looking at Pat O'Brien and James Cagney on TV. Spark and Chuck seem like nicer guys.



They were big guys, too. None of this Cagney fancy-dance stuff with the fists. Spark and Chuck were willing to take one to give one, and you couldn't beat them, not if there were a dozen of you, in anything like a fair fist-fight. When they were taken out, they were taken out with a gun or a knock on the back of the head—or some other unfair, unAmerican, method. Chuck was bigger and blonder and had a heavier jaw. The jaw was a giveaway, of course: Chuck was stupider as well. Spark (although he had a hell of a punch, naturally) carried a normal sized jaw, so that meant he was the smart one of the two. Smart enough to get the strip named after him, anyhow.

This month they're "in a native quarter" of Guam, complaining bitterly about the scarcity of women. (Spark and Chuck spent all their time in the tropics, I guess, for they always wore whites. And no matter what happened, they kept them clean. Some guys have a knack.) Suddenly, a white girl calls "Hsst! Say..." from a second story window. A rough hand immediately claps over the girl's mouth and she is snatched from sight. Spark and Chuck run upstairs, and one, two, three, four, knock out the red-suited, totally bald villain (no hero ever knocked out a villain with a fringe over his ears) and his three gorillas. The girl is "the Colonel's Daughter"; and when she discovered the spies stealing military maps from government files, they "spirited" her to their hideout.

While she has been talking and Spark and Chuck have been listening with both eyes, the inconspicuous man in the red suit has crept to the wall behind them. He presses a lever and a Murphy bed falls out, knocking Spark and Chuck unconscious.

When the thugs finally wake up, they wonder: "Wot'll we do wit' 'em?" But Red Suit has a solution: "Spider Cavern. Vit the dawn come also the spider! Ha! Our two sailors will never see the sun again!"

Well, just as the night is lifting, the gobs manage to free themselves "by rubbing their bonds against the jagged rocks." And just in time, too, for here come the spiders, and you've never seen anything like them. They skipped dinner the night before—and maybe the midday snack, too—and they are hungry. Spark and Chuck climb the walls of the cave frantically, but the spiders hurry after them in a

mass so thick it looks like an overwrought shag rug.

"Holy ---! They're gaining on us!!" says Chuck.

"Gotta match?" asks Spark, coolly brandishing the blackened end of one of the clubs they have been fighting the spiders off with. "Lucky these guys left these oil-soaked torches behind..." Spark explains, and they hurl the burning torches into the writhing, hungry carpet crawling toward them. The spiders, who must have been on a heavy diet of high-test gasoline, ignite with a gusto that would have delighted C. B. DeMille, and Spark and Chuck, coughing and wheezing, follow the smoke (Chuck, the wit, calls it "Eau-de-garbage") as it drifts to the entrance.

There, they take cover behind a couple of boulders, and when Baldy and his pals show up to see how breakfast went at Spider Cavern, one, two, three, they capture the spies and herd them into the mouth of the cave. Spark hurries off to get help, and Chuck, intent on keeping the spies holed up in the cavern, does not see the menacing figure creeping up behind him. That's when Spark proves the strip was named after the right hero.

"I wondered where the fourth guy was!" he exclaims, whopping a rock on the spy's head just as he was about to plug Chuck. (It proves, too, that Spark could count, and that was more of a rarity in the comic world than you might imagine—as was shown recently in "The Seven Soldiers of Victory.")

The sailors rush back to the village to save the Colonel's Daughter. But she has already been saved: "Lucky we came along and untied ya, or you'd have starved to death in there," two soldiers are telling the girl as she gazes up at them in rapt admiration. Hearts burst out of her balloon as she exclaims, "My heroes!"

And Spark and Chuck—as their movie counterparts always did—lose the girl again. (In one episode, they saved *two* girls and doubted dated. They were dolls and it looked like the boys were home free at last, but then the girls got to gossiping and exchanging fashion news and recipes.) But next month they'll try once more...

The last story in the book was "K-51 – Spies at War," a middling strip drawn by Powell under the name

of "Barron Bates." It was all scrunched up in ten and eleven and even twelve panel pages. You virtually needed to be Tiny Tim to read it.

Page 64 closed the magazine on a note that would thrill any young sucker's heart:

A b s o l u t e l y F r e e ! !

THE COMICSCOPE

reg. u.s. patent office

*Not a toy but a real projector*

A New Amazing Invention

Show your own

films at home ---

charge admission ---

run real new movie

parties. Now you

can screen comic

strips in your own

home and make

them in any size and

in full color and give

a real movie show.

Nothing to buy.

Everything free.

Well, almost free. You actually sent in three coupons (one from each of the Fox magazines at the time) and fifteen cents "to cover the cost of mailing." I tore the coupons out of magazines in a second hand store, sold a grocer back some pop bottles, and sent away for the new amazing invention. I got my money's worth.

The "Comicscope" was a flat chunk of cardboard, brightly and crudely printed with pictures of the current Fox heroes, which could be folded into a small box; and a glass lens as lumpy as the bottom of a pop bottle, and a fourth the size, inserted into a short black cardboard tube. When the box was assembled there was a hole in the front for the lens and one in the bottom for a light bulb, and a slit in the side to push the sample Comicscope strips through. It worked—once you'd sealed up all the gaps in the seams of the box with masking tape and squeezed into the blackest closet you could find—but it was hardly worth it. The Comicscope strips were abominably drawn and printed, not in full color, but in red and black on a saffron background. You couldn't use regular comic strips, naturally, because the printing came out backwards, and besides, who'd want to cut his comic books in little ribbons about two inches wide?

Why Fox peddled the Comicscope is a puzzle. There was obviously no money in it—the fifteen cents must *really* have gone for



handling and mailing costs—and although new Comicscope strips cost a fair amount, they were so crummy it is hard to believe Fox had any genuine expectation of selling them. The Comicscope must not have boosted sales for his comic books, either, for you almost never saw an old *Wonderworld* with one of the coupons missing. Of course, he may have used the names of those who answered for an advertisers' sucker list, but the chain carried so little outside advertising even this seemed unlikely.

The real answer is probably that Fox was a promoter. Promoters will promote things, even when there's no money in them, just to keep their hands in—rather like Dr. Snaffleblocker, the Hollywood physician in one of Jack Woodford's rare non-sex novels, who was discovered as the story opened performing an abortion on a chipmunk....

And finally, the back inside page carried ads for two new Victor Fox comic books, *Science Comics* and *Weird Comics*. Further along, we'll take a brief look at them.

This was the eleventh issue of *Wonderworld Comics*, March 1940.\* A year earlier the competition hadn't been as stiff. But now things had changed. Superman was appearing in a quarterly all his own. So was Batman. Captain Marvel was just getting off the ground. The Human Torch and Submariner (we called him "Submarine-er") were going great guns. Jay Garrick had breathed the hard water formula and become the Fastest Man Alive. And yet, because of Berold and because in 1940 we still responded to fragments of beliefs and feelings and attitudes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that *Wonderworld* exploited, the book, if it had lost ground, remained far more thrilling and competitive than a present-day comparison with the other—the mainline—comics would seem to allow. We took Superman's and Batman's and the others' way of looking at things with us (as they took ours). We didn't take Yarko's or K-51's or Dr. Fung's or even much of

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\*The first two issues were titled *Wonder Comics*. The Flame graduated to the cover feature when the title changed with the third issue, and would remain there for nearly all the remaining 33 issues.

The Flame's.

But in its day, it was a good comic book. And it was the best of the Fox chain.

## II.

*Wonderworld* was an immediate success, and five months later Fox brought out *Mystery Men Comics*. It featured Fox's most enduring characters, Green Mask and Blue Beetle; a science fiction strip by Dick (Frankenstein) Briefer called "Rex Dexter of Mars," and Klaus Nordling's "Lt. Drake – of Naval Intelligence." Other than a two-page "Hemlock Sholmes and Dr. Potson," by "Fred," a remarkable cartoonist who did wonderfully wild and corny two-pagers for almost every comic book outfit in the business without ever (as far as I know) signing his name, the rest of the stories are without interest. There is the usual magician and the usual secret agent and the usual western and the usual Cecelia Munson derivation, this time from Fu Manchu.

"Green Mask" and "Blue Beetle" were pretty usual, too. It is probably the secret of their success.

In the beginning, "Green Mask" was drawn in a style halfway between "Reg'lar Fellers" and early "Red Barry." Green Mask wore dark blue tights with a yellow stripe down the side, skin-tight pale blue doublet and trunks, a massive, nail-studded leather belt, cavalry boots, a dark blue, crimson lined cape—and a close-fitting dark green mask that covered his head and eyes and knotted in the back to fall in two trademark streamers. The artist, variously called "Walter Frame," "Michael Barrett" and "Jerry Logan," was obviously no reader of *Esquire*. (Berold, who did the marvelous covers for *Mystery Men*, or the color control man, even tried changing the colors of Green Mask's costume in an effort to devise something more compatible with that mask—but nothing came of it.)

Aided by "the only man who knows the Green Mask's real identity," a reporter named "News" Doakes, he solved a number of uninteresting crimes that bored the police, rather than baffled them, into inaction.

In later issues, under a variety of indifferent artists, he acquired an off-stage identity as Michael Shelby, the

son of a murdered senator who had opposed gangsterism; gained super-powers from a "Vita-Ray"; picked up a bumbling boy assistant named Domino who—fittingly—threw boomerangs; took on a new aide named "News" Blake ("News" Doakes was probably too undistinguished a name for a Vita-Rayed superman to associate with); and finally lost most of his super-powers when it became clear his future lay in being a Batman imitator.

In the summer of 1940, Green Mask acquired his own comic book, ultimately outlasting all the Fox heroes, except Blue Beetle, and many of his betters in other magazines as well. It is not only in politics and breakfast cereals that mediocrity has a certain staying power...

"Blue Beetle" began as a secondary feature in *Mystery Men*. Within a half-dozen or so issues he opened the book. His own bi-monthly magazine appeared in February 1940, and soon afterward he had a twice-weekly radio program. His durability was so great, he survived Fox Publications itself. We'll come to back to him...

Dick Briefer was no science fiction artist. His spaceships looked like hot water heaters installed by a mad plumber. He was no science fiction writer, either: "Look, Dr. Harvey! Are my eyes deceiving me, or is that a *cone* shaped planet I see in the glass?" Yet, when he worked on it, as he did in many of the serious "Frankenstein" stories, Briefer had a certain way with horror and pathos that transcended his writing and illustrations.

The first "Rex Dexter of Mars" strips display his early style at its best, before he began to splash the ink around in big, loose, broad, black strokes—and some of them display his talent for story, as well.

Rex Dexter of Mars, "Here on Earth – 2,000 A.D.," helps save the planet from a terrible menace. For this he receives the acclaim of Earth. But two issues later, Dexter brings a huge, fright-maddened Kong-like creature to Earth for exhibition. When it runs amok, destroying and maiming, he is forced to kill it, stabbing into its brain through one of the half-human beast's bulging, horrified eyes. Earth forgets its acclaim, it demands his death, and so Rex Dexter's friend the President of Earth is forced to exile him. His



fiancee, Cynde (pronounced “Sin-dee” Briefer tells us), re-avows her love and joins him as he ventures from planet to planet. Eventually, Earth forgives Rex, and he returns now and again to aid us.

If you could overlook the scientific absurdities, “Rex Dexter” was often an entertaining strip. It was a popular one, too, and Rex had his own comic book for a while. He might have had it longer, but Briefer went on one of his periodic humor binges—and he wasn’t near as funny then as he was later with the “Frankie” Frankenstein yarns...

Klaus Nordling of “Spark Stevens” signed “Lt. Drake – of the Naval Intelligence” as “F. Klaus.” Other than that, it was pure Nordling, a man who handled his blacks and his action a lot better than his anatomy. The stories were good fun, though, and his drawings improved steadily. Lt. Drake, a blond chap with a tickler sized mustache, got around a lot, investigating trans-Atlantic gamblers, opium smugglers, and such—the kind of activities you’d think would make the Coast Guard jealous. Nordling must have had a thing about spiders, because a couple of months before Spark and Chuck had all that trouble in *Wonderworld*, Drake got mixed up with them, too. These didn’t come wall-to-wall, however. They came in little gelatin capsules that melted in your bedclothes while you slept, releasing an angry black widow...

*Mystery Men Comics* had a potential it never realized. Under an adroit publisher, “Green Mask” and “Blue Beetle” and “Rex Dexter” could have become outstanding: the material was there to be used. The success they achieved in their imperfections hints at the greater success they could have had.

It was becoming increasingly evident that Victor Fox was a promoter, not a publisher. Nor an editor.

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In November of 1939 Fox issued his third magazine, *Fantastic Comics*; the following January *Science Comics* appeared; and in March *Weird Comics*, the last monthly of this first series was distributed. They were all out of the same stewpot—the meat picked off and the vegetables watered down—that *Wonderworld* and *Mystery Men* had been ladled from. *Fantastic*

was outstanding in one way, though. It published the most preposterous and grotesque comic hero ever created. His name was Stardust.

The feature character, however, was a reincarnation of Samson. “Out of the mist of history comes the mighty Samson... Like his ancient forebears Samson pits his tremendous strength against the forces of evil and injustice....” Samson was a thick-muscled, old-fashioned, Middle European looking fellow with long blond hair, blue thonged sandals, and a pair of woolly trunks that looked more like a mass of pubic hair with delusions of grandeur. In later issues he put a belt on, but it didn’t improve the effect such.

The early Samson stories were compounded out of *Wonderworld*’s greatest flaws. Rather than true comic strips, they were a series of tableaux; and where Basil Berold could rise above his weakness here, and make a virtue of it, “Alex Boon” could not. The nameless European backgrounds, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century kings and rulers and iron men in their stiff collared uniforms, the super-weapons that merely belched larger shells and more poisonous gasses, and had been invented in the last century by Robida or Verne or Wells—these could have been surmounted and advantageously used, as they were in *Wonderworld*, if as in *Wonderworld*, they had been tied to a contemporary symbol such as the Flame. Samson, standing there in his reincarnated carcass, hairy, natural-looking pelt, and shoulder-length hair, was hardly that symbol.

Soon, the artwork was modernized—if not improved—and Samson took on a vaguely Anglo-Saxon appearance, the locales were moved nearer home, the villains Americanized, and Samson provided with a boy assistant, David, who, although he scarcely seemed adolescent, was similarly clad (beside Samson, who was always lifting him out of harm’s way he looked about the size of a wet fox terrier). The improvements wangled him his own bi-monthly magazine—but they didn’t cure the basic weakness, which was Samson himself...

“Professor Fiend,” by “Boris Plaster” was a two-pager that was four pages long. It was drawn by “Fred” of “Hemlock Holmes and Dr. Potson” (who also drew “Billy Bounce, the Kid Detective,” occasionally, for *Mystery*

*Men*, and—among a legion of others—“Mike, the Mascot” and “Mortimer, the Monk,” for Columbia Comic Corporation’s *Big Shot Comics*). “Fred” was wild, and he wasn’t subtle (“Eureka! I’ve just invented a bladeless knife so people can’t cut themselves while slicing bread!”), but for some ungodly reason he was funny. He still is.

It is “Stardust – the Super Wizard,” however, who will ensure immortality for *Fantastic Comics*. No commentary, no copy, can do him justice. You must sit face to face with the real thing. Anything else is like watching the last days of Pompeii with your eyes closed.

“While a secret army of spies and murderous terrorists conspires to undermine business, and the government,” says the flash panel, “a distant radio call is picked up in America—a message transmitted from somewhere out in space!”

Then, leering up out of the comic book page, we see these spies and terrorists, beetle-browed, incredibly prognathous, their short, thick muscular necks seeming to reach up for their flat and receding foreheads to haul them even further down. Imagine Basil Wolverton, the creator of Lena the Hyena in “Li’l Abner,” doing a dead serious job. Imagine something worse. Now—perhaps—you have the villains of “Stardust” in mind.

The story begins: “Listen to this, you mugs! Stardust is coming to visit the earth! He’s the super crime wiz who is busting spy mobs on a lot of planets! Boy, will he be on our necks!!”

The broadcasting companies fill the air with details that terrify even our big-shot public enemies: “Stardust, that master mind of the universe, with a mysterious knowledge of criminals, and their plans, will arrive on our planet to-night! He is traveling at amazing speed, on highly accelerated light waves! At 9:45 his powerful light will be visible in the direction of Mars, and at ten o’clock he will land some place of the U.S.A. to begin a merciless clean-up of spies and grade-A racketeers...”

The leaders of the secret army of spies and terrorists call an emergency meeting: “...his scientific use of rays, has made him master of space and planetary forces,” their radio proclaims; “the gas of a certain star



has made him immune to heat or cold."

"We must destroy him as soon as he arrives!" the terrorist leader shrieks. "Get him in the dark! Use the typhoid germs, and poison gas on him! Use our Hot-X Fusing Liquid on his apparatus! Take him apart with the atom-smasher! Turn the new shredding guns on him! Get him out of the way!"

But then the radio goes on, "...Stardust carries artificial lungs that enable him to breathe safely, under any conditions—he uses new spectral rays, that can make him invisible or as bright as the sun—he wears a flexible, star-metal skin, controlled through rays from a distant sun and rendering him indestructible by chemicals, or by electrical or violent force!"

Well, that stops the terrorists: "He's so superior we won't be able to touch him! We had better lay off him for a while, and go on with our work. This is the night we're scheduled to bump off the president—we ought to do the job before Stardust gets here let's use our expanding bullets, and send our two best shots!"

The two killers are about to plug the President when there is a sudden blinding flash; as it disappears, Stardust steps forth to say, "You are now in the power of Stardust!"

Take a blond, long-necked, ten foot tall ectomorph—a *thin* ten foot tall ectomorph—and laminate him with great bulging muscles until his head pops up out of them, disproportionately small, like the head of a man wearing six overcoats, clothe him in a purple, square-necked, skin-tight uniform with a wide, red-spotted, yellow belt, and yank out every tooth in his head, replacing them with a set of choppers two sizes too small. You now have a duplicate of Stardust, the Super Wizard.

Next, the terrorists send bombers over Washington with their new Liquid Flame Bombs. Stardust wipes out the planes with their own bombs, and turns his attention to terrorist headquarters.

"Adjust the long-range automatic finder ... get a focus and smash him into a fog!!" screams the leader, directing work on the huge atom-smasher, which looks like a metal-spined red and blue boiler standing on an enormous pogo stick.

But: "When Stardust feels the finder being focused on him, he releases his powerful Boomerang Ray,



and the atom-smasher smashes itself ... The spies flee in panic."

Stardust uses his "Magnetic Ray" to draw the spies and terrorists within reach. Then he picks them up and throws them out the window, using his "Suspending Ray" just before they crash on the adjoining roof top. Then, releasing his "Secret Ray," he brings in front of the terrorists the skeletons of the innocent people they have killed. Using another—unspecified—ray, he transports an office full of G-men to the roof top to take the spies and terrorists into custody.

"Above you, are the leaders of the spy army, with my compliments! In five minutes they will drop! Good luck!" says Stardust, flashing away into space.

The G-men's eyes follow his vapor-trail until it vanishes. And then

one says: "That's Stardust! And we didn't have a chance to thank him!"

And: "In the next exciting issue of *Fantastic Comics*, Stardust battles "Rip-the-Blood!"

Whoooh!

A year later, Stardust found love. Rushing to Earth to save the planet from enormous vultures a mad Venusian scientist named Kaos had unleashed—he got here, by the way, "in his tubular spatial, traveling at terrific speed on accelerated supersolar light waves"—Stardust arrives in time to rescue a girl the fiend had ordered up for himself. Evidently feeling that it is no time to take chances with rays, Stardust rams the vulture carrying her head on, without even mussing a hair. The dead beast drops the girl and "the girl begins falling." At the last moment, Stardust swoops down and



saves her. Then: “Are you hurt?”

“I think not! But I’m terribly upset and scared.”

“Shall I take you back to your home?”

“Oh, please, don’t take me back! Those birds have wrecked our home and killed my parents!”

“You must feel terrible! But isn’t there some place you’d like to go?”

“I’m all alone in the world, but you’re so kind I’d like to be with you until I get over my fright!”

“But I have duties to attend to!”

“Oh, please take me with you! I’ll try not to be of any bother!”

“Would you like to come to my private star for a while? It’s very restful there!”

“Oh, Stardust! I’d be crazy about it!”

Finally: “They arrive on Stardust’s star...”

“This may be your castle as long as you wish!”

“Oh-h! I can hardly believe it!”

I can hardly believe it myself. If we can have primitive art, why can’t we have primitive trash? If Grandma Moses and Mickey Walker can become famous, why shouldn’t “Fletcher Hanks”?

(I can see Hanks now, standing proudly before his one-man show. He’d be blond, of course; balding probably—ectomorphs have fine hair and usually begin losing it fairly early; thin—there might be the suggestion of a pot belly, though, after these twenty years; tall, surely. And long necked. Those early maturing, hard muscled, strong jawed, mesomorphs who made his teens miserable trouble him some yet; and even now Hanks may have difficulty talking to the prettier feminine patrons. And the dark ... well ... the dark still bothers him a little, and he always reaches around the corner to turn on the switch in the gallery washroom before he actually goes in.)

Edmund Pearson once published *Queer Books*, a marvelous sampler from eccentric novels and speeches and stories. Today, he would have included “Stardust.”

*Science Comics* and *Weird Comics* didn’t even have a “Samson” or a “Stardust” to leave to posterity.

The titles of some of *Science*’s strips tell the story: “The Eagle” (this was a few months after “Hawkman” appeared in *Flash Comics*), “Electro” (“Jim Andrews, electrical scientist, is working with a pair of giant electrodes ... ‘Good heavens! There’s going to be an accident here!’ ”), “Cosmic Carson” (by Buck Rogers’ current artist, George Tuska, and fully as good), “Marga, the Panther Woman” (Van Dorf, a mad physio-biologist, escaped in the heart of the African jungle from an asylum. He had been confined there for attempting to produce a race of people with the blood of panthers fused into them. As hostage, he brought a beautiful, white, blonde nurse with him ...)

*Weird* featured “Thor, God of Thunder,” a reincarnation of Thor, god of thunder; then, when this reincarnation didn’t go over, “The Dart”, a reincarnation of “the ancient Roman racket buster, Caius Martius.” Reincarnation-wise, Victor Fox was scraping the bottom of the barrel. In private life, the Dart was Caius Martius Wheeler, a timid high school teacher of Roman history; Thor was a guy whose girl kicked sand in his face. “Thor” mutated into Peter Thor, an explosives expert who was able to fly around in a red and blue costume as “Dynamite Thor” by periodically exploding little charges of “Dynamite pills.” *Weird* also carried another of Fox Publications’ alliterative “science fiction” strips, “Blast Bennett” (altogether, there

were “Blast Bennett,” “Cosmic Carson,” “Perisphere Payne,” “Space Smith,” “Flip Falcon,” and “Sub Saunders”). There was “Birdman,” too, but he was no “Hawkman” copy: the feathers grew right out of his hide. Unless he knew a chicken plucker, it’s unlikely he had an alternate identity.

As if to make up for all this, Basil Berold worked overtime on the early covers. They are some of the most well-drawn, damndest comic covers ever printed. One—in the second issue of *Weird*—has remained in my memory for twenty-one years.

In the center of the page—her flesh translucent below the neck, displaying her skeletal structure and the outline of her body—stands a beautiful blonde girl, eyes staring blankly ahead as though she is hypnotized. Before the girl, connected to a cabinet studded with dials and buttons and knobs, is a huge white crystal ball blazing with an orange corona. Its rays, apparently fluoroscoping the girl’s body, illuminate a garish laboratory crammed with bizarre vacuum tubes and insulators; they illuminate, too, the rectangular panel in the wall behind her, and the immense, swarthy man—his Eastern face hideously contorted—clad in a dark turban and robe with a figured red sash, who looms menacingly, massive arms reaching out as though he is about to mug or strangle her.

Blue robes billowing in the right foreground, a totally bald, vaguely Mayan-looking man crouches over the controls of the crystal ball. On his head is a peculiar apparatus resembling a switchboard operator’s headphones, but from its top two calibrated structures are thrust and miniature arcs of lightning play between them.

On the left is an open Egyptian mummy case. In that case, fully wrapped, except for his face and the right hand is a husky man with distinctively English features. The free right hand holds a .45 caliber automatic pistol, and a shaft of fire leaps from its muzzle to the chest of the Mayan, whose gnarled hands are twisted in agony.

The caption reads: “The mummy stirred... a gun flashed and blasted the fiend into eternity!”

The astonishing thing about all this is that it damned near looks real. The crazy picture looks almost convincing. The cover illustrates nothing inside, and for twenty-one years I’ve been trying—from time to time—to concoct a reasonable explanation for the scene.

I haven’t had any luck.

### III.

A time of consolidation and expansion followed. New titles were issues, but all were based on established Fox Publications characters. Although *Science Comics* and *Rex Dexter* went under, *Samson* and *Big 3* (Fox was always a promoter: the comic featured “Blue Beetle,” “Samson,” and “The Flame”) took their place. With these two, the four surviving parent magazines, and *Blue Beetle*, *The Flame*, and *Green Mask*, Fox had a stable of nine comic books by the end of 1940—not bad for a man who’d published his first one a year and a half before.

Now, with comics taking up less of the publisher’s time, Fox magazines began to advertise something new. It was called “Kooba Cola.” It was “America’s Greatest Nickel Value,” “A New Thrill!” “The Long Tall Drink That’s Tangy and Cooling as an Ocean Breeze. And the good-looking blonde said, “I’ll take *Kooba* with the new tang and extra zest—America’s favorite cola drink with Vitamin B<sub>1</sub>.”



I've never met anyone who even heard of Kooba Cola, let alone actually drank the stuff. It must have been sold somewhere, though, for soon contests were started and a premium campaign began. (You could get a raincape for 195 Kooba bottle caps, although by that time you'd probably be so waterlogged you'd hardly need it; and a basketball for 745 caps—after all, your grandchildren could play with it.)

In July of '41, while all this was at its peak, *Swank Magazine* (no relation to the current publication), "For the Man Who Knows," ogled the newsstand customers for the first time. It was a tall, saddle-stitched, *Esquire*-sized magazine, listing V. S. Fox as publisher, and packed with *Esquire*-style girly cartoons (Michael Berry, Bill Wenzel), pin-ups (you'd never recognize Dinah Shore), articles (a chapter from Irving Wallace's recent *The Square Pegs*—that one about George Francis Train, who ran for dictator to the United States and posed for Phileas Fogg of *Around the World in Eighty Days*—appeared in the January '42 issue), fiction (Jerome Weidman, Chester B. Himes), and departments (Hy Gardner, Leo Guild, Caswell Adams—and the anonymously conducted "From the Bachelor's Bar," which revealed, among the White Horse Whips and the Whiskey Collinses, the ingredients of a "Kooba Cooler": "Fill a tall glass with ice cubes. Add juice of lime or lemon. Pour in one small whiskey glassful of Bacardi Rum and fill with sparkling Kooba Cola.") It claimed a reader audience of 1,300,000.

To the public things must have looked good for Victor Fox.

#### IV.

In the space of months Kooba Cola vanished, *Swank* collapsed, Blue Beetle left the air, and Fox's comic book chain fell to pieces.

*Swank*'s actual circulation was nearer 100,000 than 1,300,000. Fox was figuring ten to thirteen readers per copy. All promoters are optimists.

*Swank* had its virtues, quite a few of them. But it had its faults. It was too cheap for the *Esquire* readers, and too high-class for the people who say "high-class." Fox tried to pump up circulation with cartoons that were a little startling for a mass circulation magazine twenty years ago: In September, a disheveled brunette smirks at the reader, "It always makes me feel better." And a near nude blonde leers from the January issue, "...then I said, I'm going as 'New year's Eve'... eating my apple won't stop me." Unlike *Playboy*'s nudes, the cartoons didn't help *Swank* on the newsstands, and the only advertisers they attracted were peddlers of men's girdles, and elevator shoes. By March '42, even the Kooba Cola ad had vanished. But then, by March '42 Kooba Cola itself had vanished.

Soon, *Swank* followed it into oblivion; unlike *Playboy*'s format, nobody ever successfully copied anything of *Esquire*'s.

Maybe Kooba Cola had its good points, too. Perhaps a publisher with a healthier string of comics could actually have established a new soft drink through his magazines alone. But Fox's magazines were sick, now. They could not even sell themselves, nor could the "Blue Beetle" radio program, for it, too, was gone. Berold had left "The Flame" and soon *Wonderworld* and *The Flame* died. Daylight was showing through the cracks in Fox Publications' false front.

The other magazines, badly dated now, went one by one, leaving only *Green Mask* and *Blue Beetle*.

By 1946 Fox had a whole new line of nine comic books, with *Green Mask* and *Blue Beetle* for the anchor men, but even though the new corporation name, Fox Feature Syndicate, sounded important, the new titles were weak: *Cosmo Cat*, *Zoot*, *Wotalife*, *Jo-Jo the Congo King*, *Rib Tickler*, *Rocket Kelly* and *All Top*. None of them were monthly and titles changed frequently. Fox tried new promotions and new premium campaigns. Nothing would have helped but better art and better stories. *Green Mask* folded. In desperation Fox turned to crime comic books: *Murder Incorporated*, *Famous Crimes*, and *Crimes by Women*. Even *Blue Beetle* was dominated by "true" crime yarns and the title character almost vanished from the covers. By 1948, the Fox magazines, despite excursions such as *Meet Corliss Archer*, a teenage comic, were leaning heavily on jungle queens and scantily clad costume heroines like Phantom Lady to do what only better stories and illustrations could do—and Corliss wasn't above showing a little thigh, herself.

Of all his original titles, only *Blue Beetle* was left. The character of the strip had been changed so many times it had virtually no buyer image at all. Fox was in deep trouble.

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In the beginning, Blue Beetle was probably an accident. Something to bolster up the *Mystery Men* title. The third issue, for example, leads off with a nine page Green Mask yarn; Blue Beetle is buried in a four-pager toward the back of the book—he doesn't even have the finishing spot. But there were no human relationships to bring life to "Green Mask" as they had to the comic book leaders, "Superman," "Batman," and "Captain Marvel," and the others.

Sure Green Mask and "News" Doaks worked together, but the reporter was only a handy news source; Green Mask did without him easily enough—and Green Mask's private life was so utterly anonymous you began to wonder what he was covering up. Without the mask, maybe he was Rin-tin-tin.

Blue Beetle, however, needed his friends: Dr. Franz, who had devised his mailed costume, and helped him with disguises and scientific identification work; Mike Mannigan, his heavy-set, semi-comic—and unsuspecting—partner in his real identity as Dan Garrett, a rookie policeman; and, after the strip developed, Joan Mason, reporter and Garrett's girl friend. (Garrett dumped an equivalent of Green Mask's "News" Doaks, a disheveled newshawk named Charley Storm.)

Clichés they were, but they allowed plot development and reader identification and brought at least a semblance of "real life" to Fox's magazines, where most of the heroes didn't seem to have a close friend in the world. It's no wonder Blue Beetle soon became *Mystery Men*'s most popular character.

He wore blue tights of a special lightweight mail, a close-fitting, thigh-length blue doublet and hood of the same material, a leather belt with a blue beetle symbol set into the center of the yellow buckle (which contained a secret compartment for skeleton keys and such), and a black domino mask. In costume, Garrett looked much like a medieval knight stripped of his trappings.





Panels from Blue Beetle #56 (May 1948)

Garrett's partner on the police force, Mike Mannigan, was convinced—no matter what heroics Blue Beetle performed—that he was a criminal, and although he frequently helped Blue Beetle capture crooks, when the work was done Mannigan tried to capture him, too. They hit each other over the head so many times their skulls should have looked like scale models of the Andes.

It was probably this gimmick that interested the radio producers. It gave the show the predictable, mechanical format they needed for broadcasting: Dan Garrett and Mannigan on patrol duty, a crime is committed, Garrett evades his partner and becomes Blue Beetle, solves the crime with the help of Dr. Franz or Joan Mason and the hindrance of Mannigan, and finally escapes Mannigan's clutches to become Rookie Patrolman Dan Garrett—who missed the whole thing—once again. It should have interested them, anyhow, because this was substantially "the Green Hornet's" format—and it was doing very well just then.

By September of 1940, "Blue Beetle" was on forty-four stations from coast to coast, twice a week, including WMCA, New York, and KSAN, San Francisco. And like "The Green Hornet," each episode was complete in itself, something of a novelty then when serials were still going strong.

Then, like the rest of Fox's paper empire, the "Blue Beetle" radio show went under.

Trying to find the right formula, Fox tinkered with the strip continually. The writing was never good—it never realized the inherent possibilities of the characters—but the anonymous artwork, crude in the beginning, improved under an artist of some skill and style—and then declined again in the hands of the likes of Larry Antoinette (who also drew "Sub-Zero Man" for *Blue Bolt Comics*) and others. For a time, possibly inspired by Tick-Tock Tyler, "The Hour Man," Dr. Franz came up with "Vitamin 2-X" for Garrett, a concoction that gave him temporary "super-energy."

By the winter of 1945, however, *Blue Beetle* was quarterly, drawn with astonishing ineptitude by a cartoonist named Stoner (the "official" name of the artist was "Otis," and it endured through several cartoonists, just as had the original "Charles Nicholas," and, a little later, "Walter Swift").

Fox had come up with a new circulation gimmick: readers sent in their photographs, and each issue a boy and girl were selected to accompany Blue Beetle on his adventure. The strip had given up resemblance to the original; Blue Beetle now had super-powers, including flight, and only Joan Mason remained of the original format—she was the kids' chaperone.

The gimmick, as usual, didn't pay off. But Fox had a new one by late '46: "Green Premium Coupons." They were printed in every issue of Fox comics, and they were really a bargain, a lot better than S&H Green Stamps. If you saved every coupon from every Fox magazine published, you could have gotten—free—a pair of boxing gloves after only seventeen years, or a magic set or wallet after twelve and a half. The only disquieting note was that Fox Feature Syndicate reserved the right to withdraw without notice any or all of the premiums at any time.

By now, Blue Beetle had lost most of his super-powers and was making his living again as a rookie policeman. Stoner was still at work, and the drawings were worse than ever. But *Blue Beetle* was bi-monthly once more; maybe the premium gimmick worked for a while.

Less than two years later, those kids saving up for boxing gloves discovered they should have sold short. Fox was pushing crime comics now, and *Blue Beetle* had moved up to a monthly. A new "Blue Beetle" artist—a considerable improvement on Stoner—was at work and the strip had returned to something resembling its original format.

Then the bottom dropped out. Sales fell off and *Blue Beetle* went bi-monthly again.

Fox, who had sexed up stories a la Fiction House to raise circulation,



now went a step further in an effort to stay in business. And with the instinct of a man in the wrong business, he did the thing that has destroyed marginal publishers again and again and again. What Victor S. Fox did led directly to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority. His magazines were not the only ones, nor was he principally responsible, but without Fox and the publishers like him, the Code would never have come into being. Censorship of adult literature is an evil thing. Censorship of a child's literature, by someone other than the parents, is not a good thing—but it is a better thing than the license that permitted Victor Fox to publish as he did.

The Fox Feature Syndicate and *Blue Beetle* turned toward the sado-masochists, the fetishists, and the other hangers-on in the borderlands of sexual neuroticism.

The May 1948 issue began with a story about a beautiful, long-haired blonde who had devised “the biggest plan in the world” for making money. Clad in a filmy leotard, cut to the thigh on either side, and a halter with shoulder-length, fingerless gloves—typical fetishist costume—she begins a campaign of murder. On page two, she drives a knife into the throat of “the debutante of the year,” just after the girl has undressed for bed, and drops her calling card, a miniature sphinx, in the blood that runs out upon her breast. On page three, she plants another knife between the breasts of a strip-teaser dressed in bra and panties. The girl she murders on page eight shows only a bit of thigh as she takes a knife in *her* throat. Why did the killer do it? “They think I’m mad, eh? Just wait’ll I’ve killed a half a dozen prominent women...as the Sphinx! Then I start snatching them and their

friends will fall over themselves to pay ransom! They’ll *know* I mean business!”

In the next, July 1948, issue:

Seamen perished in plastic webs! Such was the nightmare woven with the skill of the spider by a somber team who hoodwinked justice until BLUE BEETLE himself decided to become entangled in the case which was plotted by a twisted brain, then fulfilled by a mistress of murder, the BLACK WIDOW!

That first line would fascinate a psychiatrist.

The Black Widow’s dress, supported by two narrow straps, plunges to the waist in the front and back, and at the sides it is slashed from waist to hem, revealing her thighs and



Panels from Blue Beetle #57 (July 1948)



hips. The bra cups, with her nipples as the center, are two spider webs. She wears French heels. Virtual duplicates of this costume may be found in the most extreme fetishist drawing and photographs.

The Black Widow carries a device that ejects filaments of plastic similar to spider webs. She sprays the faces of her victims with this goo, and as they strangle to death before her, she leaves her sign, a dead black widow spider upon their bodies. Why? "...I have quite a score to settle with the Navy! One stupid seaman left *me* at the church... And forty years ago my father was disgraced with a dishonorable discharge! No... We hold no love for the Navy... Neither of us!" Ultimately, she and her father, the mastermind, capture Mike Mannigan and Joan Mason, and take them to the cellar of their home, where, against one wall, an enormous plastic spider web is woven. In the concluding scene, the Black Widow deliberately kills her father with the plastic spray gun as he dangles from the center of the web, obstructing her clear shot of Blue Beetle.

You do not have to be a Fredric Wertham to read the meanings of these stories and their words. For even know much about sex symbolism.

These stories were sold to boys and girls. They were sold to children without sexual experience, searching for the meanings and relationships of sexual experience. The Black Widow and the Sphinx must have helped them in their search.

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I don't know how much longer *Blue Beetle* was published. Fox Feature Syndicate went on. Later than year, the third issue of *Crimes by Women* appeared. The cover displays four attractive women, guns in their fists, their clothes in tatters, attempting a jail break. They are trapped on the top of the prison wall, and the guards are machine-gunning them. "*You asked for it...sister!*" a guard yells as he shoots a blonde down. The brunette, her eyes bulging, cries "*Aaagh! My leg!*" The redhead fires back at the guard tower. "*Here's one for luck!*" she screams. And the other blonde, the best looking one, kneels in the foreground, a blazing sub-machinegun cradled in her arms. "*Try this in ya belly ya louse!*" she says.

Eight years before, the Flame's foster father had sent him out into the world from the pages of another Fox magazine. He had said, "My son, you leave us armed with potent mystic powers—use them for good!"

Victor Fox had come a long way.

V.

**B**lue Beetle made his final appearance in the mid-'50s. The Fox Feature Syndicate was dead at last, and Blue Beetle was headlined in a special issue of *Space Adventures*, a Charlton publication. His performance in costume was only a token one, irrelevant to the story, and Dan Garrett—still a rookie cop—solved the crime in his other blue uniform, the one with the badge on it.

It was a sign of the times that he spent almost a page trying to figure out a way to rid of Mike Mannigan and into costume. In the old days he'd have told Mannigan there was a lead he wanted to follow up; by '54, he wrecked the patrol car—"realism" was in.

The decline of the idealistic super-hero, and the ascendance of the all too mortal hero-victim and hero-

villain—culminating in the Feldstein EC comics—was inevitable. When America entered World War II, our eyes had been turned inward for a decade; Steinbeck, Saroyan, and Caldwell, each an idealist, were our leading writers. We carried that home-grown idealism into the war, and, at war's end, we discovered it had not been enough. We discovered, too, that some of it had been false. Saroyan, who depended so much on his personal vision, cracked wide open in *The Adventures of Wesley Jackson*; Caldwell became an aimless hack; Steinbeck a more conscientious one. As a nation we turned first to disillusionment, then to self-examination and self-criticism, then to self-revilement and despair and apathy. Our literature followed us. And our popular literature, of course, did too.

In science fiction, *Galaxy* appeared on the scene as the last wave of disillusionment ebbed, and rode the tide of caustic self-criticism to success with Ray Bradbury's "The Fireman," published in book form as *Fahrenheit 451*. And then *Galaxy*—and much of the rest of science fiction—went out with the tide and came back in with self-revilement and despair.

It has been suggested that, beyond her nature as a person and as a sexual symbol, woman symbolizes the world to man. Perhaps this is so. If it is, it may explain the hatred of woman in our post-war, Cold War, literature (and life), for we have surely hated the world we live in. Perhaps it explains the success of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer, and Ian Fleming's James Bond stories, and the countless other, similar, stories of "detection." In any case, the post-war detective story has mirrored our disillusionment, too.

War or no war, however, the decline of the super-hero was inevitable. The rhythm of idealism, disillusionment, self-criticism, self-revilement, despair—and then, when the emotions have exhausted themselves, the founding of a new optimistic realism on the sound principles of the old idealism, followed by the creation of a *new* idealism, is an inevitable one itself. Already, in the comic world we are seeing, perhaps, in the revival in somewhat altered forms of the costume heroes of the past, the first signs that the cycle is making a full turn.

Maybe even Blue Beetle will come back once more....

The decline of Victor Fox and his magazines was inevitable too. He began with a remarkable artist, Basil Berold, and a seller's market for the comic book costume hero. But popular fiction and trash mirror their times, they do not—like art—create them, and Fox, by 1941, was a man out of his times. Whatever his age, he was born twenty-five years too late.

Even so, he might have survived as others have. But Fox was always a promoter, never a publisher or editor. Like all promoters, he could never understand that you can't sell people entertainment—not with prize contests and premiums—they have to buy it. Nor could he understand what every good editor and publisher knows, and what the bad ones seem never to believe—despite the bleached bones of too many magazines to count—that you can always sell sex, but you can never sell depravity, not in the long haul, not in the competitive market. The public only pays for what it wants. And most people have a mean streak of decency in them.

This was Victor S. Fox's education. He began his career in his best blue suit, standing in line for a high school diploma. He ended it, blue jeans gaping at the knees, being drummed out of kindergarten.

—Richard Kyle

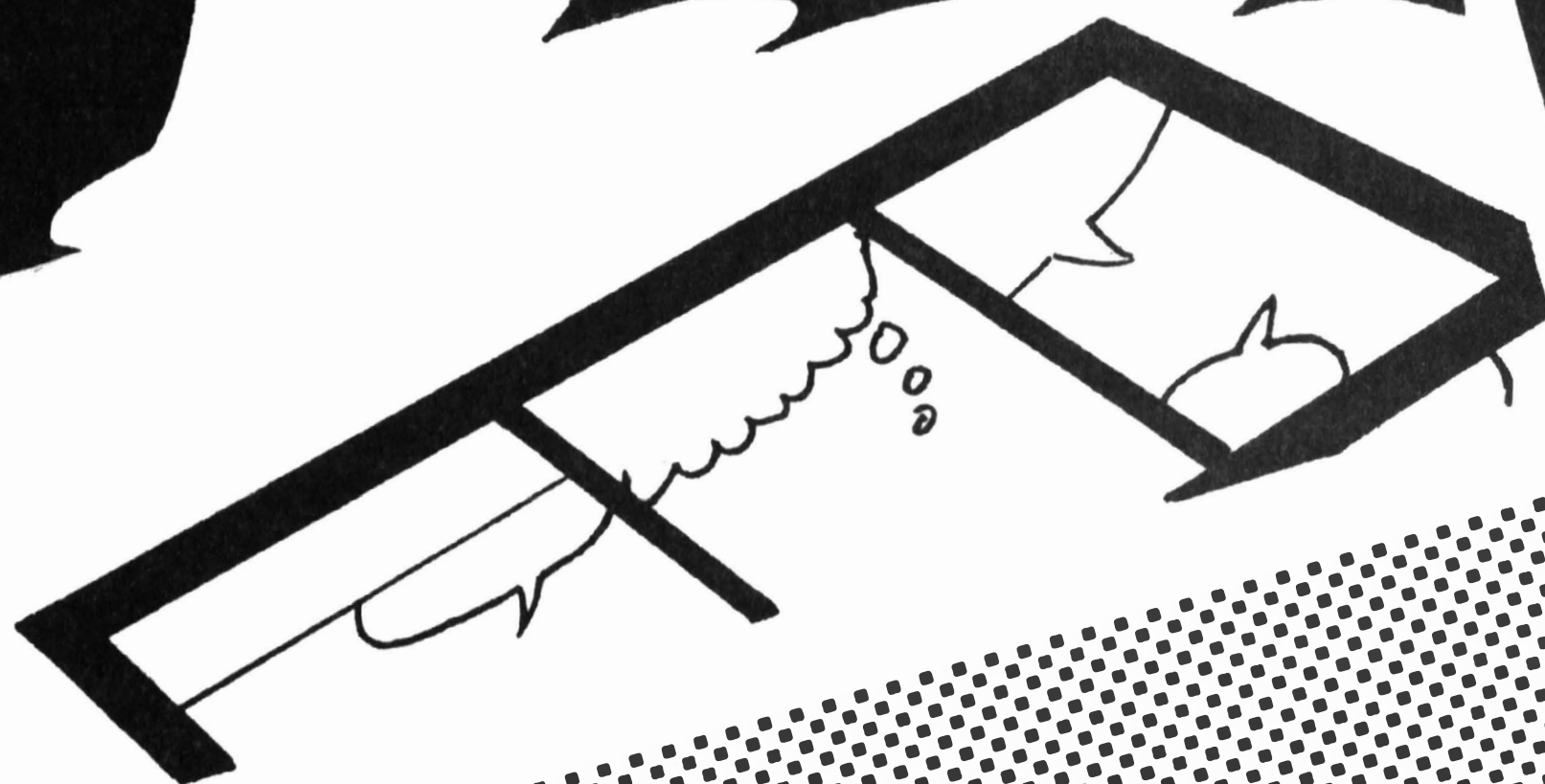




SHOCKING! BIZARRE!  
INSANE!!

# TALES OF TORMENT

by John E.  
Stockman





# ARMAND THE TERRIBLE

Story and Art by John E. Stockman

From *Tales of Torment* #1 (1963)

## PART ONE

### “When the Bug Bit”

For years Armand Tooner had collected certain selected magazines, comic books and hardback books. He had been collecting for more than fifteen years. During this period of time his interest never flagged and he was able to amass a huge amount of books.

Armand's great collection was housed in three large wall-to-ceiling bookcases in his bedroom, in the home of his parents. His bedroom was stacked with collectors' items that were the envy of many fans. Two walls were covered with nothing but pulp magazines, while the other contained science fiction and adventure hardbacks. The closet in the room was used to house the comic books. These were stacked in six high piles in neat orderly fashion.

There was a lot of blood, sweat and tears that went into the building of this massive collection, not to mention the money put out in acquiring the rarer items. Armand had spent many hours in and out of the local bookstores as well as putting in many more hours in correspondence with fellow collectors. Many a hard-earned dollar went into this hobby, which he had nursed for so many years. Armand did not like to think of how much was put into his collection. He had never kept figures. When something was available that he wanted badly, he would scurry about like a mad man until he had the money to make the purchase. However, after many frustrations, he had reached a point of saturation. He had nearly everything he set out to get. Nearly all of the old rare comic books were in his fold. Only a few odd copies remained to be gotten. His pulp magazine collection contained complete sets of *G-8* and *Spider*, as well as a goodly supply of the rare terror and horror types. He also had representative accumulations of nearly every title available during the 1930s and 1940s.

Among Armand's hardbacks were two complete collections of Edgar Rice Burroughs books. He had a set of first editions in very fine condition which had the original dust jackets as well as a set of reprints which also contained dust jackets. There were some rare Lovecraft books as well as several Max Brand first editions. He had Smith and Kline and Rohmer too, as well as a great number of odd hardbacks. Armand had gotten just about all he could, in the fields he collected, and had settled down to reading his books over

and over. New items for his collection were not coming in so fast anymore, so he had to satisfy himself with re-reading his valued treasures.

On reaching his thirtieth birthday, Armand was given a lecture by his older brother, Marcus, who berated him for his childish habits, and advised him to get rid of his boyhood relics and grow up.

Marcus was older than Armand by some ten years; he had served in the Army in World War II, and had brought back with him a large assortment of souvenirs from Hunland, as well as a chest full of medals. Marcus gave his souvenirs to Armand after he had gotten married and moved out of their parents' home. Armand stayed unmarried and remained living with his parents in their two story dwelling in a middle class section of town.

Armand retained a low paying job, earning some forty dollars a week, for over a period of six years. Seemingly he was happy with his lot, for he never complained or sneered at the efforts of those about him. He would work all day and come home on the bus to eat a good supper; then he would go to his room and pull out two or three old comic books or pulps and spend the evening reading.

However, the day was coming and events would take place which would part Armand Tooner with his wonderful collection of books, comics, and pulps. It all happened so unexpectedly and quite by accident. Armand had been given a lift home from work one evening by a fellow employee. On their way home they stopped at a hobby shop so that Armand's friend could buy a bottle of dope to finish up a model airplane he was working on.

Armand remained in the car, but as luck would have it, a windbag of a woman was in the store at the time, and had engaged the clerk in a lengthy conversation. Armand began to get fidgety and went into the shop to see what was keeping his pal. While there he noticed a scale model HO gauge railroad set up at one end of the shop, going around and around two loops of track which wove in and out of miniature cuts and fills.

Before they left the hobby shop that evening, Armand had purchased a boxcar kit, a three foot length of track, and a switch. He had always been a little leery about building



models, especially the kind that could be operated. However, with a little coaxing from the clerk, Armand took the big step and entered the model-railroading hobby. It was a whim that he would live to regret.

After assembling the boxcar kit and rolling it back and forth along the three-foot length of track, Armand was well-pleased with his initial success. Soon he purchased another car kit and assembled it. Then he bought another length of track and another switch. He had the two lengths of track and the two switches connected together on a panel of plywood in the attic. He amused himself by rolling the two cars back and forth on the length of track and passing them through the switches. Finally he got up the nerve to tackle a locomotive. He bought the cheapest one he could find and found that this went together much easier than the two car kits. It was one of the quickie screwdriver assembly jobs, and Armand experienced no trouble with it.

Armand struggled along with his newfound hobby for two months before he had assembled enough components to form a loop of track on top of the plywood panel, a four-car freight train, and a small power pack. When he turned on the juice for the first time, and the little train sped around the loop, he went wild with joy. The thing worked! He had built a model train, and it worked! Armand was on his way—or so he thought—into one of the most fascinating hobbies of the day.

After this initial success nothing could hold Armand back. The bug had bitten him. He was more enthusiastic than he had ever been about anything including his book collection. However, he soon discovered that he wanted something much bigger than the simple oval of track he had laid. He dreamed of a large layout covering the whole attic with two or three freights, a couple passenger, and a work train. He had visions of model scenery that would take time and money to build. He saw great cities rising above the plywood top and rails run through tunnels, along the countryside and over bridges. Yes, Armand dreamed of a vast model empire.

His parents gave him permission to use the attic but would promise no financial aid. This he had to provide for himself. Armand soon found out that his meager funds would not advance his cause very far, especially if he were to acquire some of the more expensive fifty dollar steam locomotives he craved for his road. After paying his parents twenty bucks a week out of a forty-dollar salary, after deductions, Armand didn't have very much left to spend. Certainly he would need plenty of money if he were to build benchwork throughout the attic and purchase loads of track and switches, not to mention the great quantity of freight cars he would need. Then there were those expensive locomotives and high-priced passenger cars. He wanted at least two passenger trains and three freight trains, and one work train with the big crane. Then he had to consider the large power pack or packs he would have to have to run this whole conglomeration. He shook his head in dismay as he sat one evening, watching his single diesel locomotive haul four freight cars around the loop of track he had assembled.

"At this rate I'll be years trying to build this thing," Armand said aloud. "Money—I need money!"

Almost at that instant a thought entered his brain, and he exclaimed aloud once more.

"I'll sell my books and magazines!"

But—no, no, no! He could not do that! Sell the books that he had treasured for so long? My no! Heavens, what a

terrible thought. Armand got up from the box which he had been seated on, and held his hands over his ears as if trying to shut out an unbearable noise. He moved about in circles as if trying to decide which direction to take. Finally he left the attic and went to the confines of his bedroom.

Armand fidgeted about nervously all night long, trying to get the thought of selling his book collection from his mind. But he was stuck with it. The railroading bug had bitten him and would not release its bulldog hold. It kept at his tortured mind, not letting him have a moment's rest until he would give in to the whim. Armand pranced about like an animal in a cage. He could not sit still for a moment or eat a meal in peace. His mind continually drifted from one thought to another, but always they were connected with his problem. Where to get the money for railroad supplies he needed so badly? And always, when he asked himself this question, the answer would be the same. "Sell the books—sell the books—sell the books—sell the books—sell the books."

"No, no, I cannot!" Armand would plead with his thoughts.

But struggle with the problem as he would, he could not win over the terrible thing that had happened to him. He wanted that model railroad empire so bad, he could not sleep nights thinking about it. In fact, when the scales of his mind balanced out, he wanted the railroad worse than he wanted his fabulous book collection.

"I'll do it! I'll sell the books!" he finally agreed with himself.

It was a momentous decision and one that Armand Tooner would live to regret, but at the time it was made, his interest in the book collection was at a low ebb and his interest in the little trains was at its zenith.

A week later, during a little get together at the Tooner household, Armand brought his brother, Marcus, up to his room and explained his plan to him. It was always Armand's habit to go to his brother when he needed any help or advice. That evening he told Marcus of his plan to sell the books. Marcus shook his head with a positive motion as he agreed with the decision.

"Well," Marcus said on hearing Armand's story, "It's a good thing you are getting rid of this crap. I've been telling you for years to stop confining yourself to this room in the middle of all these baby books."

"I don't know if model railroading is any better though," Marcus continued. "But at last you'll be doing something with your hands and maybe you will learn something about electricity."

"Then you'll help me cart the books downtown Saturday to sell them?" asked Armand.

"Sure I'll help you," Marcus agreed, "But can't you get more for them by advertising in the newspaper or one of your so-called 'fan magazines' which you have been bragging about for so long?"

"Perhaps," Armand whined with a tormented look crossing his pale narrow face, "But that will take so long, and I want the money fast. Then, there are so many phonies and shinney artists that I would come in contact with that I might end up on the short end for all the trouble I'd have to go through. By selling my collection in one lot to a downtown dealer I could clean the whole thing out with one sweep in a day's time."

"All right, you do what you want," Marcus said as he turned to leave the room. "Pack everything up by Saturday morning, and I'll be over to take them to town for you."



So Armand worked like a fiend in an effort to pack his magazines and hardbacks up as fast as he could. He wanted to get the job done in order to be ready when Marcus showed up. Armand brought several cartons home from work along with a couple balls of twine. He listed everything he had as he roped it or placed it in place in one of the cartons. When he had finished, he had quite a large list which was written in duplicate.

On the fateful Saturday, he sat in the kitchen drinking coffee and eating cinnamon cake while waiting for Marcus. His brother did not show up until late morning, and when he did arrive, he informed Armand that they would have to hurry because his wife wanted to use the wagon that afternoon. The two of them carted Armand's collection out of the house and filled the station wagon with the wondrous books.

A half an hour later, they were parked in front of one of the two second hand book stores in town. It was "Gagwick's Famous Back Issue Store" that they tried first.

Gagwick came out of his store to look in the station wagon after Armand had informed him that he had his collection outside all ready to sell. After opening a few cartons to see what was inside, and checking over Armand's list, Gagwick shook his head negatively.

"Oh, I don't have much call for that kind of stuff. I could maybe pay you ten cents per hundred on the comics and two cents a piece for the pulps...."

He got no further as the irritated Armand waved his hand in disgust, and told his brother to drive down the street to Saminoff's Book Shop.

"He won't pay you anything," Gagwick yelled after them.

As they drove around the block and down an alley which led to the rear of the second dealer's store, Marcus shook his head. "If that's all they offer you, we'll bring the books home again and advertise them. There's no sense in throwing them away."

"Aw, he's a damned liar," Armand cracked. "Gagwick has had plenty of guys ask him for some of the magazines and comics I have—not to mention the Burroughs books and other hardbacks."

"They're all alike," Marcus answered. "That's why I want you to

get out of this stupid hobby. You have to deal with too many fakes."

"Oh, I can get pretty near what I want through the mails," Armand snapped, "but I don't want to go through all the trouble and time. I thought sure one of these guys in town would realize I have a good collection and jump at the chance to buy it."

"Well, let's see what they other guy says," Marcus replied. "Maybe he'll come across with something worthwhile."

"I hope so," Armand whined, as he did not like the idea of taking the whole collection home again and going through the trouble of unpacking it. But if Saminoff gave him the same line that Gagwick did, he would have no other course to take. Already his mind was forming plans for a mail auction as he sat beside Marcus, who was busy battling the Saturday traffic.

After some delay, they reached their destination in the rear of Saminoff's Book Store. Armand went into the store through a rear entrance, and spoke to a short big-bellied man with black curly hair who was in his late forties. He smoked a cigar and listened intently to what Armand had to tell him.



"Is it crap?" the man growled after hearing Armand's story.

"No, there's good stuff in this lot," Armand whined. "Come on and see for yourself."

Saminoff, with a scowl across his greasy face, followed Armand out the back door into the alley. There he looked through the boxes of books and magazines that were being offered for sale. After opening a few boxes and glancing at the contents, he stood back for a time surveying the scene.

"Is everything like those boxes I opened?" he finally asked.

"Yes," Armand answered hurriedly. "I have some old rare

comics, pulps from the 1930s, and all the Edgar Rice Burroughs books besides several rare science fiction and horror hardbacks. Look, I have it all listed here."

Saminoff took Armand's list and inspected it carefully. Then he took out a pad and began to jot down some quick figures. After some moments of thought, he blurted out, "I can't give you an exact amount on this lot the way it is here. I'll have to see it all piece by piece—but it will be upwards of six hundred dollars."

"Six hundred," Marcus exclaimed. "Take it, Armand!"

"Now wait a minute," Saminoff said as he held one fat greasy hand up. "I'll have to look at everything you've got there, and I don't have the time anymore today. Why don't you leave it with me and stop in sometime Monday and I can tell you exactly what I'll pay."

"But it will be more than six hundred?" Armand gasped.

"Oh, I'm sure it will be way over that amount if the other books you have are in as good a condition as those I just saw," Saminoff replied. "I need this kind of material. Do you have any idea of what you paid for all of this?"

"No," said Armand, "but everything there is old out of print material. I have the first fifty-four *Tip Top Comics*. I have over two hundred old *King* and *Ace Comics* besides complete collections of *Spider* and *G-8* pulps and besides that, hundreds more old terror and horror pulps. Why I have...."

"Okay, okay," Saminoff stopped him. "We'll see. You know I'm offering a dollar each for old pulp magazines, and I give two bucks for some of those old comics."

"Take the deal, Armand!" Marcus again exclaimed.

"Well, all right," Armand stammered hurriedly, now becoming more excited on hearing Saminoff's prices. He knew he had plenty of the items Saminoff needed and paid good for, so he agreed to leave his books with the dealer over the weekend so that they could be counted and checked by this tub of fat.

Saminoff had the two brothers carry the cartons into a back room of his store. There they sat them, one on top of the other, away from the other stock in the room. As they brought them in, Saminoff glanced hurriedly



through box after box and made many mental notes. He almost gasped aloud when he saw copies of rare Lovecraft and Smith books in almost mint condition. He nearly did a jig on seeing the Edgar Rice Burroughs first editions with dust jackets as well as a duplicate set of Burroughs in reprint editions which also had dust jackets. Yes, there were nice items in that lot. Saminoff let out a low gurgling giggle when he opened a box of old *Spicy Mystery* pulps, which were in such good condition that it looked as if they had just been purchased from the newsstand.

"Oh, I'll pay you well for these," Saminoff told Armand as he watched him carry in a carton and place it on top of one which the dealer had just been looking through. "Listen, you have stuff in here that I'll give you five bucks each for."

All this talk began to make Armand feel warm all over. If he was having any regrets about selling his collection, he didn't show it that day. The way Saminoff was building up the collection to the two brothers, each time they came into the room with a load of books, Armand thought that he'd surely get over a grand for the complete lot.

When he heard Saminoff tell Marcus, "I pay twenty bucks each for copies of *Back to the Stone Age*," Armand's mouth spread wide in a big silly grin.

The two of them left the big-bellied dealer gloating over the collection of books, and headed for home. Armand was already dreaming of the model railroad equipment he would buy with all the loot he was going to get. But, an important item that he had forgotten was to get a receipt from the dealer. During all the huffing and puffing, carrying the books from the station wagon to the back room, and listening to all of Saminoff's flattery, Armand had completely forgotten about receipts.

As the two brothers drove home that day, Armand's dreams were interrupted by Marcus's stern voice giving him some advice.

"Now listen, Armand," Marcus said. "When you get the money, don't spend any more than twenty-five bucks on this railroad thing of yours—and put the rest in the bank. Do you hear me?"

"I won't spend much on the railroad," Armand meekly replied. He

was used to Marcus's lecturing, and while Armand would usually listen to his brother and agree with what he said, he would go out and do the opposite of what he was told.

Armand celebrated that Saturday evening by going to a neighborhood movie and watching a double feature horror show. Very seldom did he step out, and when he did, it was usually to watch a movie or go to the library and roam about the book stalls. During the weekend he constantly dreamt of buying locomotives, car kits, model buildings, and countless other accessories to go with the proposed empire he had planned for the attic.

Carefully Armand went over the model railroad magazines and picked out the items he would buy first. He went up to the attic and took various measurements to see how much lumber he would have to purchase for benchwork. Oh yes, he was very busy that weekend making out a list of supplies he would buy during the coming week.

When Monday finally arrived, it was a nervous Armand Tooner who rode downtown on the bus. The butterflies were already swarming in his stomach. Armand planned to visit the Saminoff Book Store after he got off of work. He was sure by that time the dealer would have figured out how much his collection was worth to him. So Armand went about his work in a fog. His mind was continually focused on the big check the dealer was going to give him. Over six hundred dollars! Armand was positive that Saminoff would give him a thousand dollars. As Armand wandered about on the job, with his mind a million miles away, he forgot what he was doing and often had to be reprimanded by his superiors.

When five o'clock rolled around, it was a happy Armand Tooner who made his way two blocks north and three blocks west to Saminoff's Book Store. Since the bookstore stayed open until six o'clock, Armand had plenty of time to reach it after he had gotten off work.

On entering the front door, he was confronted by a sourpuss of a woman in her fifties. This was Leah Martoo, the old maid clerk who had worked for Saminoff for some twenty-four years. She was a thin, nasty-looking thing with dirty gray hair and a look of importance which continually covered her face.

When Armand did not see Saminoff around, he asked Leah where the puffy dealer was.

"Oh, they've gone to Florida," Leah snapped with a smug look. "I'm in charge of the store until they get back."

Leah knew Armand well, as he had frequented the store often during his book collecting days. She did not like Armand any more than she liked any other man and usually went out of her way to be disagreeable to him. It was a sort of religion with Leah to hate men as a punishment because one of them had not married her.



Leah Martoo

"He's gone?" Armand gasped in amazement on hearing this news.

"Yes," snapped Leah with a smug look. "They go to Florida every year."

"But, didn't he leave a check here for me—for my books?"

"Why, was he supposed to have a check here for you? He said nothing to me about buying any books."

"Yes!" Armand exclaimed. "My brother and I brought a collection of books down here Saturday and left them. Saminoff said he would give me an exact figure on them today."

"I don't know anything about that," Leah replied.

"But he said to come in today and he'd have it all figured out," Armand persisted. "Mr. Saminoff said it would be more than six hundred dollars."

"Oh my no, no, no," Leah waved in disbelief. "Saminoff never pays that much for books—oh my no!"

"But I brought them in here with my brother Saturday...."

"I don't care what you did Saturday," Leah cracked. "I don't know anything about it. You'll have to see him when he gets back."



“How long will that be?” Armand whined, with a tormented look crossing his thin pale face.

“They always stay at least a month.”

On hearing this news, Armand’s mind was sent spinning. A buzzing noise filled his ears, and he turned around and around in the aisle trying to get his bearings.

“I can’t wait that long,” Armand suddenly cried as he started back along a side aisle between a large wall bookcase and a table laden with junk magazines, toward the rear of the store.

“Where are you going?” Leah demanded, sensing that her customer was up to something. “Come back here!”

However, Armand did not hear her, or, if he did, he paid no attention. He was bent on reaching his collection. He had no idea of what he would do once he reached it, for there was too much there for him to cart home alone. About the only thing he could do would be to take one box load, and that alone would almost be too much. But his mind was not thinking clearly at the moment. Weird sounds and jumbled thoughts were cluttering up his mind as he made his way to the spot where he and Marcus had deposited the famed collection.

Armand continued on down that long aisle until he reached the back of the store, and then he opened a door and entered another room.

“Stay out of there!” Leah yelled after him again. “You can’t go in there!”

But Armand paid her no need. He went to the exact spot where he and Marcus had placed his great collection the Saturday before. Now there was nothing but empty space on that spot! He could not detect one of his books as he hastily looked around the room.

## **PART TWO**

### **“Days of Torment”**

The following five weeks were hectic ones for Armand Tooner. He haunted the book store of Saminoff, waiting for the return of the shifty dealer and his wife. The sourpuss Leah Martoo was forever pointed in the direction of poor Armand each time he would enter the store.

“They’re not back yet,” she snapped with a gleam of pleasure in her eyes.

These words were spoken over and over again, each day for a solid month. Armand’s interest in model railroading had vanished as suddenly as it appeared on that fateful day when he stopped in the hobby shop. He could not rest for one minute while his books were in jeopardy. What had happened to them, he did not know. He was sure that Saminoff had either sold them in one complete lot over the weekend that Armand and Marcus delivered them to the dealer; or Saminoff had taken them home with him. But there was nothing he could do until the dealer returned to the store.

Finally, the vacationing dealer and his wife returned from Florida. On his first day back at the store, Saminoff was confronted by Armand Tooner, who had made a special trip on his lunch hour to see the man with whom he had left his prized collection.

“Mr. Saminoff,” Armand said in a low whisper. “Do you remember me?”

Although Leah Martoo had since filled the dealer in on Armand’s continued visits to the store in his absence, the dealer shook his head as if trying to remember who Armand was.

“I’m the one who left the book collection with you just before you left for Florida,” Armand told him with a sick grin on his face. “I brought it down with my brother on a Saturday, and you said to leave it and come back the following Monday.”

“Book collection,” Saminoff grunted. “I don’t recall that.”

Armand’s eyes opened wide and his mouth gaped open in surprise. He couldn’t believe what his ears heard.

“But I was in here with my brother the Saturday afternoon before you left for Florida, and we left my collection with you for a complete appraisal,” Armand whined with a worried look covering his face.

“No....” Saminoff shook his head, still going through the motions of pretending that he was trying to recall something.

About that time Saminoff was approached by a browsing customer who wanted to know where the books on mathematics were located. Saminoff took him to the spot and struck up an idle conversation with the

man in order to play for more time and hope that Armand would give up and leave the store.

However, Armand Tooner stayed on the spot near the dealer’s large roll-top desk, which was located in the center of the store, flanked on all sides by tables laden with cheap magazines. Seeing that Armand wasn’t going to leave, Saminoff returned to his desk and went through the motions of going through a stack of papers he had placed there for closer scrutiny. Finally, after some moments of silence, he turned to Armand.

“Look—why don’t you come back tomorrow,” he said. “Let me look around the store and check through some of these papers more thoroughly. Maybe I can find out what happened to your collection.”

Armand stood motionless for some seconds before agreeing to Saminoff’s proposal. He could not stay in the dealer’s store much longer anyhow, as he only had an hour for lunch and did not like to come back late. So he departed in a much worse state of mind than he had been when he entered the store.

He did not get a moment’s rest the remainder of the day. He tossed fitfully in bed that night. Armand had to get out of bed and walk around his room. He went down to the kitchen to get a glass of milk in an effort to quiet his nerves. If he had been worried while Saminoff was in Florida, that was nothing compared to the state of mind he was in now. The thought of losing everything continually pounded his brain.

When Armand returned the following day, again on his lunch period, the dealer was nowhere to be found.

“He went out to look at a book collection,” Leah Martoo, the nasty clerk, told him with a sneaky grin on her face.

Armand only shook his head in despair. He left the bookstore in a daze and returned to his job. After working hours, he again tried to get in touch with Saminoff, but on arriving at the store, he was confronted once more by the sourpuss of a clerk who told him the dealer had left for the day.

The rest of the week, Armand got the same story. The dealer was always out when he phoned from work—the dealer was gone to lunch—the dealer had to inspect a book collection—the dealer was gone to the doctor—the



dealer had to have a tooth pulled—the dealer was at the courthouse paying taxes. On and on it went each time poor Armand returned to the book store or tried to telephone from his job.

However, one day, Armand was able to see the dealer's wife, Garda, who was a woman of some forty years weighing in at one forty with a rock-like muscular structure. She glared at him when he asked about his book collection. Garda had been filled in on the whole entanglement with Armand Tooner by her husband and Leah Martoo. She had all her answers ready for the poor soul when he wanted to know when he was going to get his money for the books.

"We don't have your collection here," she snapped with a mean glint in her eyes. Garda was a hard-core sophisticate and was a most vicious person to deal with. Ordinarily, it was either Saminoff or Leah Martoo who waited on customers as the disposition of the dealer's wife was too ruthless in nature. Although Saminoff was a shinney artist from way back, he had a more pleasant oily way of doing his dirt; while, on the other hand, Garda did not care what she said and, more often than not, spewed forth her vitriol in front of a customer. However, Saminoff intentionally let Garda take care of Armand in the hopes that his overbearing wife could scare off the wretched collector once and for all.

"But I left them here with my brother...."

Armand could get no further with his explanations, for the hard Garda shouted in a loud voice for him to get out of the store before she called the police and had him arrested for loitering.

"You get out of the store," Garda howled, her eyes glazing with a vicious gleam. "Get out of here and stay out—or I'll call a cop!"

The shocked Armand retreated hastily to the street with a tormented look across his face, and made his way from the area.

The Saturday following the return of Saminoff and his wife from the south, the dealer and his wife were busy helping Leah in the store. Since Saturday was a busy day, all three of them had to be on hand to take care of the business. The sneaky dealer had foreseen the return of Armand in the company of his older brother. No doubt, after the trouble Armand had

with them, he would call in the help of his brother. Saminoff had only got a look at Marcus during the period he helped Armand cart the books into the back room, but he could tell that the brother of this weasel would be a much tougher proposition than the milky Armand. However, Saminoff was ready to play his trump card, and waited all day for the two brothers to show up together.



Garda

The day rolled on and neither of them put in an appearance. Saminoff smiled as he looked at his watch. Perhaps his woman had scared Armand off. Maybe the poor sap had given up and would leave him be. However, when three-thirty in the afternoon rolled around, the dealer looked up from his desk and saw the form of Armand Tooner standing there alone.

Saminoff looked surprised at first, but his expression immediately changed to one of recognition.

"Say, I've been looking for you," Saminoff said. "I've checked this place from bottom to top and I can't find a one of your books."

"Look," Armand said with a sick look. "Here's a duplicate copy of the list I gave you with the books."

Saminoff took the list and glanced over it for a few moments before replying. "Ha ha ha—I haven't seen this kind of stuff around here for fifteen or twenty years, when I sold a collection to Nod Teraby from Bismuth."

"But I left them here with you that Saturday with my brother," Armand told him. Now Armand's already tortured brain was getting another dose of failure. He turned about in circles with head turned toward ceiling, with an awful look of pain written in his eyes.

Leah Martoo, sensing that something was up, moved over to the

desk and stood alongside her boss. "I kept telling him you didn't have his books, but he wouldn't believe a word I said."

Saminoff sat there smiling and shaking his head pleasantly. "Are you sure you brought them here? Maybe you took them down the street to Gagwick."

"No!" Armand suddenly shouted, finally getting up the nerve to raise his voice. "I brought them to you and you know it!"

At this sudden outburst, the customers who were browsing about the bookshelves and magazine tables suddenly glanced in the direction of the argument. All seemed interested now that there was the possibility of trouble.

"Say, what are you trying to do here?" Saminoff cracked, getting up from his seat. "Are you saying I'm a thief?"

"I, I, I," stammered the nerve-wracked Armand. "I, I, brought my books and you said you'd have to check them over...."

"Oh come on," Saminoff cried, waving his hand in disgust. "Get off of that song and dance, will you? I'm tired of hearing it."

"Then give me my books back or a check to cover them," Armand bristled in an angry voice.

"Tell him to take us to court," Garda suddenly snapped.

The hard-bitten wife of Saminoff had approached the desk from her perch at the cash register. She wanted to get in on the kill with her husband and Leah. The hard-core witch stood with folded arms and a look of importance as she listened to what was being said.

"Take us to court, Buster!" she cracked again.

"Yeah," Saminoff joined in. "Where is your receipt? Show me your receipt for this collection I was supposed to have taken in."

This statement jolted Armand back on his heels. In their haste to complete the job, on that fateful Saturday, he and his brother had completely forgotten about asking the dealer for a receipt to show that he had left his collection at the store.

"But I was down here with my brother," Armand persisted. "He can vouch for that."

"Oh, ho," Saminoff howled with a wave of his hand. "That's no good here, fella! You could bring any bum





out on the street in here to lie for you.”

“But I’m not lying,” Armand whined in an agonized tone. “I brought my collection in here and you said you could give me over six hundred dollars for it ....”

“Oh no!” they all chorused in unison.

“I never paid that much for a book collection in my life,” Saminoff said with a wild laugh. “You must be really dreaming. Weeee! What a bunch of hooley!”

Garda snickered and spouted forth her two cents worth. “Nobody gets that much from us. Why, the most we ever paid was two hundred dollars for a Civil War collection a year ago, and that was for a whole library.”

“But you swore you could ....”

“Oh shut up and get out of here, you sniveling wretch,” Garda cracked.

“Believe me fella, we don’t have your books,” Saminoff said, shaking his head and smiling, at the same time managing to wear an expression of complete ignorance of the matter.

“I want my books back!”

Armand cried aloud, once again managing to raise his voice to a high pitch. “I want my books or the money you promised me!”

Leah stood there with hands on hips looking at both Saminoff and Garda alternately as she smiled with pleasure at the discomfort of Armand. This tickled her no end, and she did not hide her feelings.

“Why don’t you give him a quarter to get rid of him,” she joked.

“We’ll give him nothing!” Garda bellowed in anger. “Listen, Buster, you get out of here or I’ll go out and get a cop!”

Saminoff nodded in agreement and said, “If you got a receipt for those books, cough it up. If you don’t have a receipt—you don’t got nuttin’ brother—so beat it!”

Armand stood there, stunned. He knew then that it was a lost cause. There would be no getting his books back from those three lice. He had been taken. If only he had had presence of mind enough to have asked for a receipt on that fateful Saturday. But he didn’t and the crooked dealer was taking advantage of his error. His mind was now spinning as he tried to think of words to say. But he could think of nothing now. A burning desire deep down inside of him wanted to strike out at the dealer and his two associates. He

wanted to go wild right then and there, and tear that book store into a million pieces. He wanted to go charging into fat Saminoff and send blows to his ponderous gut until the greasy weasel begged for mercy. He wanted to kick Garda and bat Leah over the head with a pipe. Armand, however, who was docile all his life, held his inner rages in check and quietly turned around and walked out of the store.

“Take us to court,” the smug Garda called after him in a sarcastic manner.

Beaten and downcast, Armand Tooner walked to the bus stop, half blinded by the moisture which had filled his eyes. His mind spinning like a top, a sick feeling in his stomach, and a big ache in his heart, Armand Tooner trod the weary path for home. Yes, home and a big empty room where his great collection had once been housed. All thoughts of the new model-railroading hobby were cast from his mind. The railroad empire in the attic no longer mattered to him. It was as if he had never been interested in models at all. He could not think straight any more. He was so confused and heartsick over the whole affair that he had no room for hobbies of any kind.

He thought of calling his brother, Marcus, to see if he couldn’t shake the books out of Saminoff. But he dismissed this thought immediately. What could Marcus do? Possibly he could bat Saminoff in the eye and find himself in jail for his trouble. That would do no good. The dealer had probably worked this out on other poor saps before. He knew what he was doing or he wouldn’t have been so sure of himself when he denied ever having seen Armand’s collection. No, there was no sense in calling Marcus in. Besides, his brother would probably chew him out for being so stupid. Anyway, by this time his once proud collection was either split up and sold piece meal, or some well-to-do collector was called in immediately by Saminoff to buy the whole thing. No doubt the dealer brought the complete collection home with him the very day that Armand had brought it in. Oh, he was a shifty one, that Saminoff. Mighty crafty and well-pleased with the dirty thing he had done.

So it was a sad Armand Tooner who sat on the edge of his bed in that vacant room, staring blankly at the



empty bookshelves. The books which were once housed there were no doubt on other shelves in other rooms similar to his. Well, he hoped they were being enjoyed as he had enjoyed them. Armand got up and walked about his room with a blank, faraway stare on his face. He held his hands over his ears and shook from head to foot. Suddenly he let out an agonizing wail and pitched to the floor, unconscious.

### PART THREE

#### “A New Hobby”

The week following his trial with the Saminoff bunch, Armand lay in bed deathly sick. They found him unconscious in his bedroom, and he lay in a stupor for nearly seven days. He was so sick that no one thought he would live. The dirty deal he had gotten from Saminoff had worked him up into such a state of frenzy that he couldn't take it any longer and passed out.

The whole Tooner family was seated about the kitchen table one morning, talking in whispered tones as they waited for Armand to croak. Marcus and his wife were there along with the two parents and a sister and her husband. They were eating some coffee cake and drinking coffee when they heard a noise on the stairway. The pack of them glanced up and saw Armand standing there with a big grin spreading his mouth.

“Armand!” cried Marcus. “We thought you were done for, boy!”

“I'm starved,” Armand said. “Now I want a man's meal.”

It was an excited bunch who waited on Armand that day. Asking questions and advising him to take it easy, they milled about in the kitchen while Armand ate calmly. They did not know that it was a different Armand Tooner who sat there that day, stuffing his gut. A week before he had gone upstairs to bed, a sick and beaten person, unable to cope with his tragedy. Now he was back downstairs again with a new purpose in life. During his illness something had crept into his mind. As he lay tossing and moaning, it had taken hold of him and its strength had brought him back from the brink of death. It alone had held him from the grave during the hours of sickness. It was revenge!

During the weeks following his illness, Armand started a new hobby. He dismantled the bookcases from one wall of his room and arranged a display of edged weapons where books had once been. The nucleus of this new collection was formed by the war souvenirs Marcus had brought back from Europe. There were several nice daggers, a couple of ornate swords, and a huge battle-ax which had been liberated from an old German castle.

Although Armand was bent upon avenging himself for the vicious trick the Saminoff clique had played on him, he did not rush about in a nervous, irksome manner like a wild man in a cage as he had when he collected books and was working on the model railroad. Very calmly he went about his everyday work and patiently let time slip by. Occasionally he would visit one of the local antique stores to buy daggers. Once in a while he would acquire an old rusty sword or a mean-looking meat cleaver.

Then he got into the habit of always carrying a dagger with him. One which interested him the most was a long slender-bladed dress dagger which had been worn by officers of the German Wehrmacht. It was a wicked-looking thing, and Armand continually toyed with it in the confines of his room. He brought out an old double-breasted trench coat from a storage bag and began wearing this instead of the poplin jacket that he usually wore. Beneath this coat, and on the inside of his pants, he had the dagger concealed. Very cleverly he had constructed a leather hanger for the blade, which was attached to his belt, and permitted him to carry the weapon concealed beneath his shirt, so that it was unnoticed by fellow employees.

In the evenings, after he had eaten supper, Armand would go to his room and sit for long periods, staring at the outlay of weapons he had mounted on the wall. Then, he would take the battle-ax from its moorings and go through a series of exercises with it. He would swing it about in great circles and semi-circles, first on one side then on the other. On occasion he would take the ax to the basement and sharpen its cutting edge. He tried to file down the rough spots, but the ax had seen much action in the past, and its blade was chipped in many spots. But Armand filed and filed until he had a wicked piece of cutlery to play with.

He kept up this practice for some four months. Then he began paying weekly visits to a cafeteria-style restaurant, diagonally across the street from Saminoff's Book Store. Usually he would enter the restaurant after he had gotten off work on Friday evenings. He would push a tray along the steam table and choose his favorite foods. Then he would choose a table near the front window and sit there eating and watching. He would calmly eat and patiently watch the bookstore while he ate. There were some broadleaf plants sitting on the windowsill of the restaurant, which partially hid the front door of the bookstore from his view, but Armand liked this spot, and from his position, he was able to see all he wanted to see.

Every Friday, as he sat enjoying his meal, he would see Leah Martoo, Saminoff, and the loud-mouthed Garda leave the store and lock the door behind them. The time was usually five or ten minutes to six, and Armand had this so timed that, at the moment the three departed for the day, he was just finishing his coffee. And each time he saw them leave, he would mutter to himself.

“You got me good, didn't you mister skunk? Well, you wait for a while because you're gonna get got!”

Days passed into weeks and weeks into months, and Armand Tooner continued the ritual of visiting the restaurant across the street from Saminoff's store each Friday after working hours. Seemingly this would go on endlessly with no let-up. However, the day finally arrived when Armand noticed the greasy book dealer, Saminoff, leave the store some twenty-five minutes to six. Armand became more alert than ever before when he noticed this development. It was not often that the dealer left his store early, unless he was trying to avoid someone. Armand watched eagerly for further developments. Not long after the dealer left, his big-mouthed wife Garda appeared out on the sidewalk. The hex walked out of the store and stood near the curb where she waited. Armand sensed immediately that she was waiting for her old man to pick her up with their automobile. What other reason could she



have for standing there? Quickly Armand gulped down the rest of his food while keeping his eyes on the dealer's wife. Now, his heart beat faster and his movements were jerky, as he hoped beyond hope that the time for phase one of his master plan had finally arrived.

Armand Tooner finished his meal, and quickly grasped his trench coat from where he had placed it, over the back of an empty chair. Then he departed from the restaurant earlier than he ever had since paying weekly visits to the establishment. He made his way to the sidewalk just as a car pulled up at the curb in front of Saminoff's and the wife of the thieving dealer got in beside her old man. Soon they drove off, leaving their chief clerk, Leah Martoo, to lock up for the evening. Armand Tooner saw this and a big grin spread his mouth from ear to ear.

Armand crossed the street in the middle of the block with a little trot, to avoid being run down by a wave of autos which were heading his way. Before entering the bookstore, he was careful to look inside to see if any customers happened to be browsing around. There were none. That was good. Through the glass Armand saw the scrawny hen go to the rear of the store, so he did not hesitate to enter. Quickly and quietly he took a "Closed" sign, which had been laying on the front counter, and placed this in the door window. Then he pulled down the shade. It was all done so smoothly and quickly, as if Armand had practiced it. However, Armand Tooner was no stranger to this store. He had been coming there for years during his book collecting days, and in all that time there wasn't much that escaped his eye.

Leah Martoo was still in the rear of the store, getting her coat and hat, and washing up before leaving for the day. Armand smiled a crooked smile and headed down the side aisle as quickly and quietly as he could. He could hear the old goat humming a silly tune in the back room. When Armand entered he saw her just putting on her overcoat. She gasped in astonishment when she recognized him.

"Are you back again?" Leah cracked. "I thought we got rid of you!"

Armand stood staring at her for a moment. Then a crooked smile twisted his lips in a grotesque shape as he advanced toward her.

"What do you want?" Leah snapped as she staggered backward as though being pushed. "What's the matter with you?"

Armand advanced silently and drew a long slender dagger from beneath his coat.

"My God," Leah cried. "What have you got? Bahhhhk!"

In the next instant, the only sounds uttered by either of them were an assortment of gurgles and gasps by the old hen, and one final crackling cry.

"Baahhwwwk!"

The success of this mission seemed to turn Armand Tooner into a wild savage. He let out a whoop and did a crazy jig around the fallen Leah. He was so elated with this victory that he could not control himself. But he managed to calm down long enough to finish the job he came to do.

First, he rifled the purse of Leah Martoo and took what money he found. Then, he got a stepladder, which was used by the dealer to get books from the top shelves which he was unable to reach with his short arms, and propped this up against a large book cabinet in the back room. Armand carted the body of Leah up the ladder and

wedged it between the ceiling and the top of the cabinet. He was careful to wipe his prints from Leah's purse, which he tossed up behind her body. Then he moved the ladder to its original position and departed from the back room.

His next move was to go through the dealer's roll top desk. But, as he suspected, there was nothing of value in the drawers; for the snaky Saminoff would certainly leave nothing worth stealing in the store when he was away. To be sure, sneak thieves had taken worthless items and thought they were getting away with something, but, being a crook himself, Saminoff had provided adequate protection for his valued items. He knew of the larceny in the heart of men and took no chances with anything except the cheapest of junk.

Armand Tooner's head nodded back and forth as these thoughts went through his mind. "Yes, oh thief—protect yourself well—but steal the property of others."

Before leaving the store, Armand was sure to wipe his fingerprints from the desk and door knobs. He did not think this would matter much, since he didn't expect Leah to be found for a few days, and then his prints would have been wiped away by other hands.

Armand slipped out the front door and locked it with the keys he had taken from Leah's purse. Afterwards he calmly walked to the spot where he caught the bus that would take him home. As he stood waiting for it to arrive, Armand took in some deep breaths and his mouth broadened with a smile. He was well satisfied with the day's work.

"One down and two to go," he muttered aloud, not caring who heard him.

The following morning, when the Saminoffs arrived at their store around ten o'clock, they were surprised to see that it had not been opened by their faithful employee, Leah Martoo.

"Must have got sick today," Saminoff told his wife as he unlocked the front door. "It must be over ten years since she missed opening the store."

They did not bother to call Leah's landlady to see if their clerk was all right. They merely went about the duties they were accustomed to on Saturdays. Things would be a little tougher for the two of them since Leah was absent. Inwardly they both cursed her for their discomfort. Sick or not, she should be there with them waiting on prospective customers. Both Garda and Saminoff expected Leah to phone in sometime during the day, but they received no call.

There was a part-time clerk, a Ralph Runsworth, who helped them out as best he could with his limited talents. He was hired to work after school hours and on Saturdays, but he could not make up the great void created by Leah's absence.

When they arrived at the store the following Monday morning, and had to unlock the front door again, Saminoff was wild with rage.

"What's the matter with that woman?" he roared. "Can't she get to work anymore?"

"Call her up," Garda cracked with an ugly look written across her hard face. "See if you can't find out what's wrong with her."

The greasy dealer did as his wife bid. As Leah did not want to have a telephone installed, the dealer had to call the landlady of the building in which she lived to get in



touch with her. After being informed that Leah had not been to her apartment since leaving Friday morning, Saminoff shook his head negatively as he put down the receiver.

"Where did the old goat go?" he said aloud. "Hasn't been home all weekend, Garda!"

"Well, if she doesn't show up by tomorrow morning, fire her and get somebody else to take her place," his wife retorted with a mean glint in her eyes.

Saminoff nodded with a shrug of his shoulders. They didn't care very much for the person who had spent the last twenty-four years of her life slaving for them. NO, they didn't give a hoot for the woman who had covered up for them when they pulled sneaky deals, and satisfied their every whim while working for meager wages.

Two days later, after Saminoff had put on another clerk, Garda came from the back room of the store with an ugly look written across her face.

"There must be a dead rat back there," she said as she approached the desk where Saminoff was seated. "It stinks to high heaven!"

"Well, pretty soon it will go away when the rat dries up," Saminoff advised.

"I'm not going to wait until that happens," Garda snapped. "You go back there and root the thing out and get rid of it."

Saminoff pretended he did not hear his wife. He sat at the desk thumbing through a wad of papers and said nothing. Garda nudged him with her finger and snapped, "Are you going to find that thing for me?"

"Aw, let it go," he replied with a sick look on his puffy face.

As they began to argue, a policeman entered the store and advanced to where the two bickered. Both of them glared at him with important, smug looks written across their faces. They said nothing as he approached, but they looked him up and down with annoyed expressions.

He came to inquire about their former clerk, Leah Martoo. He had been informed by her landlady that she hadn't been home since leaving the previous Friday morning for work. The woman was worried about her star boarder and had called the police in. The department, in turn, sent a man to check up on the whereabouts of Leah the day of her disappearance.

Saminoff breathed a sigh of relief on hearing this, as he was at first afraid that one of his customers had called the law on him.

"Say listen," the dealer waved with an annoyed jerk of his puffy arm, "we left here Friday evening together, and she was left to close up."

"Yes," Garda agreed with that bulldog expression. "When I left, she was just getting ready to leave herself."

"The store was locked up when we arrived Saturday morning," Saminoff continued. "She was supposed to have opened up. We haven't seen or heard from her since."

This seemed to satisfy the policeman, for he did not linger any longer. After jotting some notes down on a pad, he departed from the premises. Then, the two began bickering once again over the removal of a supposed dead rat which was stinking up the back room. As hard as the big-mouthed Garda argued, her husband remained immovable. He did not wish to get his carcass up from that desk, and he did not get up to do Garda's bidding. Instead he winked at the new clerk, who was straightening a stack of magazines at a nearby table, and remained seated.

The following day the stench was so overwhelming that it floated out into the main part of the store, and so overcame the thieving proprietor that he darted in anger toward the back room. When he opened the door, a stronger odor floated into his nostrils and almost knocked him over. He gasped and grunted as his body reeled backward as if struck by an unseen blow.

"Oh, Lord!" Saminoff howled as he staggered back into the main store. "That smell is terrible!"

"Well, I told you to find it yesterday, but no!" Garda cracked in anger. "You had to squat on your tail."

Saminoff walked about in little circles trying to make up his mind what course of action to take. He did not particularly like going into the back room where the stench was the worst, but he decided that he had better do something as the rest of the store was fast becoming unbearable. So he grabbed his nose with one puffy hand and bravely began his search.

He rooted around in that back room, poling about behind tables with a long pole, until Garda entered.

"Oh, get your hand away from your nose, you sap," she cracked. "What's the matter, can't you find anything?"

Saminoff released his nose and shook his head jerkily as he continued his poking about. He got down on his knees, grunting and puffing as he did so, to look under a large table laden with magazines. He moved a row of books from the lower shelf of a bookcase to see if the rodent had crawled behind them to die. The stench was so overwhelming that Saminoff had to leave the room, staggering like a drunk as he did so.

But Garda remained and called after her husband to come back. However, the dealer left the store and walked down the street to a bar to get some support for further explorations of the back room.

When he returned, Garda was glaring at him with blazing eyes. "What's the matter with you? Can't you even stand a little stink once in a while? Come on, look for that rat!"

He said nothing in return, but continued to search for the cause of the foul odor that had so suddenly taken over their store. Both of them removed shelf after shelf of books, but still they found nothing. The putrid stench continued to float about until Saminoff had to leave the room again.

"Come back here!" Garda howled after him as he left the store and headed for the saloon.

Saminoff stayed in the bar for a half hour trying to get the stench out of his nostrils. He drank two quick beers, then lingered with a third while striking up a conversation with another patron. Finally, after deciding that he had been away long enough, he headed back toward the store. As he walked back up the street, Garda came out of the store yelling like a wild woman.

"Ahhhhhheeeeeee! Ahhhhheeeeeee!" she howled with arms raised.

Saminoff waddled up the street as fast as his short legs could take him. "What's the matter, Garda? Garda? What's the matter?"

"It's Leah!" his wife howled in an agonizing tone. "I found Leah! Oh, I found Leah!"

It was not long before the police arrived at the store to inspect the body of Leah Martoo, which Garda had located, stuffed between the ceiling of the back room and a big cabinet-type bookcase.



All was in turmoil for sometime after that incident. Garda, who usually was unmoved by anything, pranced about the store jabbering to anybody who would listen to what she had to say. Saminoff had to sit down. He kept waving his two puffy hands about like windmills as he explained to the police and reporters as much as he could about the whole affair. Nobody seemed to know a thing about how Leah was killed, or who put her on top of the bookcase. Armand Tooner was not even connected with the affair. Since their dealings with him had happened so long ago, and since they had no trouble in convincing him that it would be useless to try and get his books back, he did not even enter the minds of the Saminoffs as the perpetrator of this foul deed.

## **PART FOUR**

### **“Blood and Wind”**

A month had passed since the finding of Leah Martoo’s body. The Saminoffs’ excitement over the whole affair had died down since the first hectic hours after finding the corpse. They had almost forgotten about the whole affair.

The police had decided that the grumpy Leah had been killed by a floater, who had surprised her, and stuck a shiv into her, that Friday evening as she was ready for leave for home. Armand Tooner had safely gotten away with his vicious deed, for all parties questioned in connection with the murder didn’t know a thing. No one had seen Armand in his trench coat, lurking outside the bookstore just before closing time on that evening. No one had seen him leave the store a short time after six and lock the door.

Saminoff and Garda were seated comfortably in their living room watching television one evening while the wind howled outside. During the day it had been rather windy and this condition continued into the night. The wind howled outside, knocking over garbage cans and other objects which had been left laying about in backyards.

As they watched their set, Garda turned to Saminoff. “How about you going up to the delicatessen for some lunch? I don’t think we have anything in the box for a snack tonight. I think I could eat some cream cheese and

crackers. You might as well get some lunch meat too.”

Saminoff did not answer her immediately. He continued viewing the program they were watching as his wife rattled on.

“How about it? Do you want to go up there or not? I’m not sitting here until ten o’clock when they’ll be closed,” Garda cracked.

“Well, I’m set for the night,” Saminoff told her as he looked around with a big grin. “You go to the store, because I can never get what you want anyway. It always ends up in an argument.”

“Oh, you lazy thing,” Garda snapped, jumping from her seat. She gave him a mean stare for a few seconds before going to the closet for her coat and hat. Saminoff looked up with that smile still pasted on his lips, and watching Garda depart from the house through the back door.

As Garda drove their vehicle out of the driveway and spun the huge heap around, barely missing another automobile, which was parked at the neighbor’s curb, a pair of eyes watched from the interior of a vacant house across the street.

A section of land across the street from where the Saminoff’s lived had been bought up by a contractor who planned to build an apartment house on the spot where three homes were standing. The houses themselves had received an initial working over by the wrecking crews, but for some six months these houses were left standing after all the glass had been knocked from the windows and the doors removed. For some reason the wrecking jobs had not been finished, and the houses were left standing. The yards were covered with high weeds, and a large ditch had been dug along the foundation of one of the structures. The windows and doors had been boarded up, but some of the boards had been removed from time to time as inspectors, police, and others roamed about the property.

On that windy night, Armand Tooner stood at the front window of one of these miserable-looking structures. He watched the home of the Saminoffs from the first floor with a cup of black coffee in one hand. He watched and waited. Armand had especially chosen that night to complete the job he had set out to do. He had waited a long time for that period of the year when he knew the

wind would be strong. It howled about outside, blowing things about, bending large trees with its power and causing shutters to flap. This was the night to strike. A night when any noise that he might make would go unnoticed.

He had brought a container of black coffee from a restaurant two blocks away. He drank this as his free hand caressed the great battle-ax he had brought with him. Armand had wrapped this in an oblong cardboard carton that he had constructed himself in the shipping department where he worked. He placed the great ax inside the carton and fixed a rope about it in the form of a handle. He could walk about the streets as long as he wished carting the ax in this manner and no one would know what he had.

When he saw the big clunker of the Saminoffs leave the driveway, he knew that one of them had left the house. He could not see too clearly who it was that had driven off, but no matter—one was as good as the other. He did not know if someone else occupied the house with the Saminoffs, but he did not care, for his mind was made up to finish off the two snakes that night. No matter who, or what he had to get by to get at that fat, greasy dealer—he was bent on finishing up that night. Armand knew that he had a better chance of completing the job he set out to do after his illness, by attacking the dealer in his own home rather than returning to the bookstore.

Armand took a pocket knife from his hip pocket and cut the rope binding the carton. With a crooked smile twisting his lips, he took the great ax in his hands and left the confines of the old house. Without another thought or moment’s hesitation, Armand crossed the street and went into the Saminoff’s front yard. He took time to look through a front window and saw the dealer watching television. Then with the crooked smile remaining on his lips, Armand walked around the house until he came to a cellar window near the back yard.

Saminoff was enjoying himself watching a routine program which he thought was so funny. Then, amid the sound of the television set and the wind outside, his keen ears heard the clinking sound of glass breaking.

“Aw—did that damned wind break a window?” he howled aloud. “I’ll bet it’s blown something against one of the cellar windows.”



With a disgusted look, he got up to go down into the basement and check his theory. There was no use in procrastinating about a matter like this, as it would have to be fixed immediately. He wanted to make sure he was right so he could tell Garda when she returned from the delicatessen. His wife would have to remain home while the window was being repaired, for they allowed no one inside of their home when both were away.

The puffy dealer flipped on the switch at the head of the stairs, flooding the entire basement with light. Then, grunting and puffing, he descended the steps into a cellar which was divided into four large rooms. One room was used to house the heating system, while one served as a workshop, one a laundry, and the fourth a recreation room.

Saminoff darted about with short choppy steps, inspecting the cellar windows. He checked through the laundry and workshop first, but found nothing. Then, he opened the door to the recreation room and immediately saw that one of the windows was completely shattered and flapping back and forth as the wind beat against it. The greasy dealer gasped in wonderment as he approached the broken window. Then a noise sounded behind him.

Quickly Saminoff spun around and saw the form of Armand Tooner standing there, glaring at him with blazing eyes. The great ax hung at his side as he stood at last before the man who had stolen his books. He was ready for his vengeance!

"What-what-what?" the astonished dealer gasped in amazement. "What do you want?"

"I trusted you with my books—and you did steal!" Armand cried wildly as he raised his ax to strike.

"Oh Lord no!" Saminoff yelled in terror, raising his arms to protect himself.

"You stole my books from me!" Armand yelled again.

"No, no, no!" Saminoff cried. "I never saw your books! Please don't! I never had your books—no, no, never had them!"

"Liar, filthy liar!" Armand howled as he advanced upon the skunk.

The dealer was whining and squirming about, hoping beyond hope that he could weasel his way out of

possible harm from the enraged Armand. He had stood before enraged customers before who had threatened him with bodily harm, but always the greasy one was able to bluff them down. Usually he would ignore threats from enemies and go about his business, but tonight the dealer knew that Armand meant business. A man wouldn't go to all the trouble to break into his house and face him with an ax if he didn't intend to go all the way. So the snaky dealer pleaded and promised Armand in order to quiet this wild man.

"What do you want? Tell me what you want?" Saminoff pleaded, hoping that he would come to some agreement with Armand. "Look—I'll give ya what ya want!"

But Armand was beyond bargaining with. He had waited long to be in the position he was in at that moment. As the shifty dealer whined and wailed before him, Armand suddenly let out a wild, crazy yell and swung the great ax in a horizontal swipe at his intended victim. The blow tore open the front of Saminoff's shirt and opened an ugly long gash across the dealer's chest.

"Ohhh ahhh!" Saminoff yelled as he fell to his knees. He began begging anew, but Armand was wild with joy as he let go with another swing that scraped across the top of Saminoff's curly-haired head. The dealer fell down backwards. Now he was beginning like a little boy for his life. As Armand jockeyed around to administer the death blow, Saminoff rolled over and over like a walrus, bleeding and sniveling.

Armand let go with a blow that missed its mark and busted a chunk of cement out of the basement floor. Saminoff howled as he rolled about, first one way, then the other. Armand yelled some crazy oath and let go with a terrific blow that caught Saminoff in the back between his shoulder blades. With a horrible howl of agony, the dealer shuddered for a few seconds and then lay still. Armand hauled his great ax back overhead and brought it down again on his victim. There was a sickening thud as the weapon's sharp blade severed the dealer's head.

With a wild look of triumph, Armand held his ax overhead and did a weird dance about the basement of the house. Then, after this initial jubilation wore off, Armand climbed the cellar steps and flipped off the

light switch. With the basement in darkness, he descended the steps and waited hidden in the shadows.

The big-mouthed Garda returned from the delicatessen five minutes after Armand had seated himself on a chair in a secluded spot under the cellar steps. She spouted her vitriol about, upon entering the front door.

"That clerk down there has got to go," she cracked, thinking that her husband was still watching television.

When he did not answer, she bellowed, "Did you hear what I said?"

When he still did not answer, Garda went into the living from the hallway, and looked about for her man. When she did not see him, she bellowed in an even louder voice.

"Where are you??"

Garda did not like it when she spoke and was not answered. With a vicious glint in her eyes, she proceeded to the kitchen where she deposited the groceries she had purchased on the table. Then, with big strides, she darted from room to room calling Saminoff's name. Finally she went to the cellar door and called down into the darkness.

"Are you hiding down there—drinking beer?" she yelled.

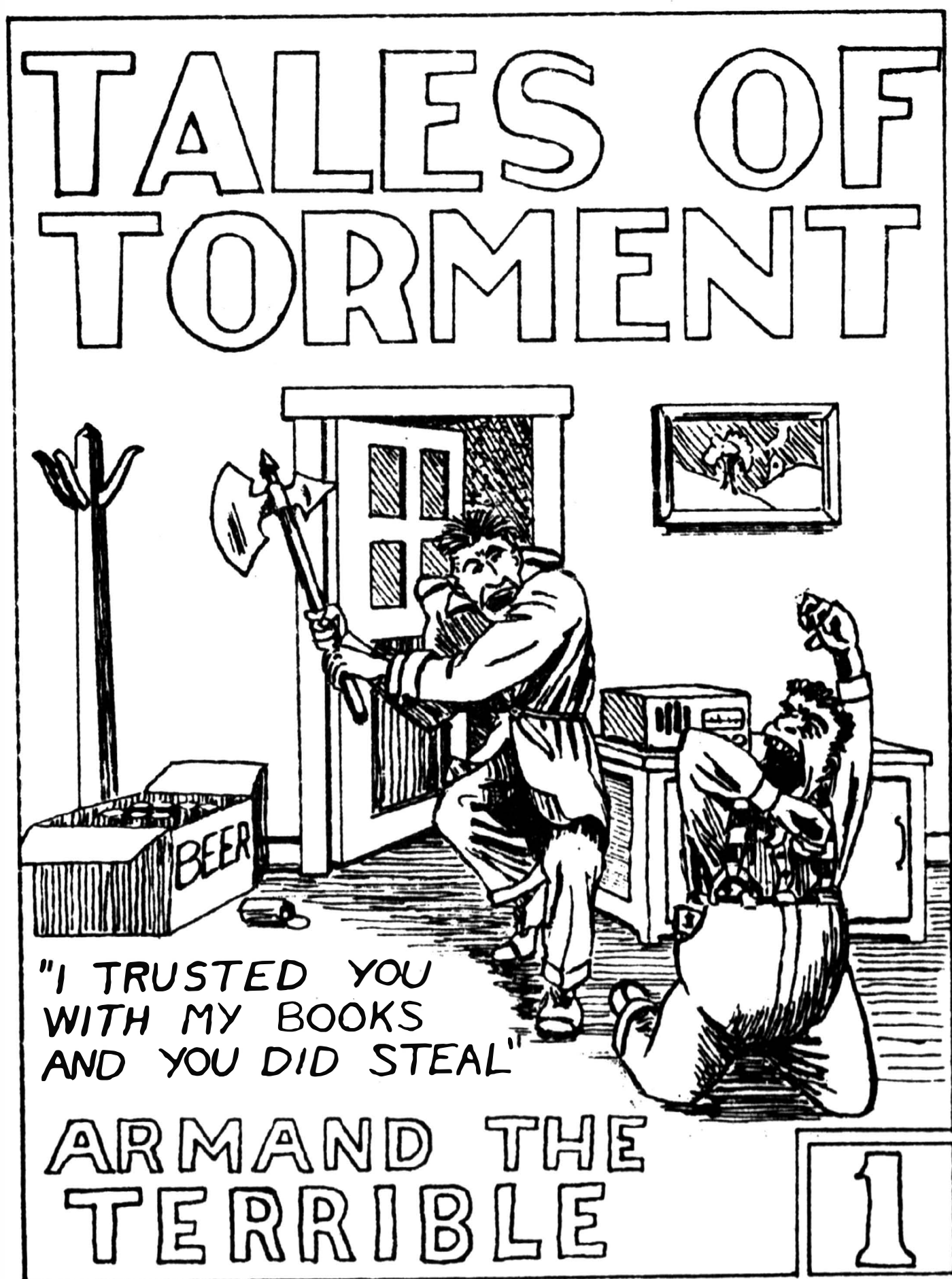
When she got no answer, Garda proceeded to the upstairs where she pounded on the closed bathroom door.

"Are you in there?" she cried. But, her hammering opened the door, and she saw that the room was vacant.

When she failed to find Saminoff on the second floor, Garda stood at the top of the stairway, with hands on hips, looking down into the first floor hallway. She dismissed the thought that her husband had visited a neighbor, for they were not on good terms with those who lived about them. She knew that he didn't leave the house to go to a saloon, for without the car the lazy tub of lard was stranded. He would certainly not walk anywhere. So Garda proceeded toward the cellar door once again, as she imagined that her old man was in the basement, hiding from her while drinking a bottle of his favorite brew. It would be nothing new for her to find him seated comfortably in the dark sipping a bottle of beer.

With firm movements, Garda went to the cellar door and flipped on the light switch. Then the vicious woman descended the stairs into the basement. She failed to see the intruder lurking beneath the staircase,





and did not see him as she looked about that section of the cellar where he was hidden.

When she opened the door to the recreation room, she saw a sight that jolted her back on her heels. Her husband's body was laying on the concrete floor in a pool of blood.

"Waaahhhkkkkk!" Garda screeched when her eyes met this sight.

She turned to run from the awful sight, but standing in the doorway, blocking her way, was Armand Tooner with the great ax in his hands.

Garda could only hold her head in her hands, and scream loud and long.

"The witch from hell!" Armand cried as he approached her. "The devil woman will die this night!"

Then, the crazed Armand brought his mighty ax down on the skull of Garda Saminoff and watched her body drop over that of her husband.

"Hiya hi!" Armand howled in delight after the deed was done. "Hiya Hi—I have won! I have won!"

With a wild song on his lips, Armand Tooner again did that weird dance in the basement of the Saminoff house. It seemed as if he would never stop. Around and around in circles, about the two bodies, he danced. With ax raised above his head, held by both hands, he went through his act.

Any plans for escape that he might have had, before finishing of the Saminoffs, had certainly vanished from his mind in this hour of victory. He seemed possessed with the thought of his deed so much that he continued his celebration until he dropped from exhaustion on the floor near the bodies.

How long he had lain there, he did not know, but when he finally came to his senses, he found himself staring up into the faces of four uniformed policemen.

Armand gave forth with a silly laugh as he attempted to stand up. They helped him, and he let forth a louder laugh and shouted for all to hear.

"I have won! Do you hear me? I won! Ya ha ya ha ya ha! I win out in the end. They tried to get me but I got them!"

No one could make any sense out of what Armand said, and the only way they identified him was from cards he carried in his wallet. They took him downtown to the station and called in his parents who arrived in the company of Armand's brother Marcus.

After Marcus had heard the story from the police, he shed a little light on the matter by informing them that his brother had sold his entire book collection to the dealer months ago. Then, with a little digging, they found out that Saminoff had made out no checks to the name of Armand Tooner in the past several months, after the collection was delivered into the dealer's hands. It was also discovered that Armand had no bank account whatsoever, and since he had purchased no new equipment for the model railroad he'd intended building, they assumed that Saminoff never paid Armand for the collection, and Armand had taken revenge on the dealer and his wife.

Later they tied the killing of Leah Martoo in with Armand after finding the slender-bladed dagger on the wall of his room. Since Leah had been killed with a similar instrument, and her death occurred after Armand had been bilked out of his collection, they were satisfied that he had killed her too.

When the story came out in the newspapers, informing the public what was known about the case, phone calls and letters began pouring into police headquarters. Almost every one had, in some way, implicated the Saminoffs as thieves. Although Armand had completely lost his mind, the truth was divulged by the evidence uncovered by the police, and the letters received from the public.

One such letter told how the Saminoffs had gotten the collection of a well-to-do collector much in the same manner as they had stolen Armand's books. Like Armand, the man had been a fool to trust the dealer, and in turn was cheated. Although he took Saminoff to court over the matter, he was unable to get his collection back for he had no evidence that the crooked dealer had his books. Other letters accused Saminoff of similar dirty tricks.

Another letter said, "It couldn't have happened to two nicer people."

Still another read, "They ought to give Armand Tooner a medal for the service he has done for the community."

And from a lawyer, "I'll take Tooner's case for nothing."

But it's all over with now, and Armand never went to trial. He is now resting in a sanitarium where he is free from the trials of collecting. His only words remain the same as those he uttered to the police when they found him in Saminoff's cellar.

"I won! I won! I am the victor! They tried to get me and they got got!"

**The End**



On a shelf in my studio is an eight inch stack of Dell comic books ... *Four Color Comics* #75, 93, 100 (Gene Autry) and #269 (Johnny Mack Brown), *Gene Autry* #1 through #37, and *Johnny Mack Brown* #1 through #9. There are gaps in the stack. I haven't located several numbers yet, and the rest of the missing issues do not contain that particular distinction that makes this stack contain the work of one certain illustrator.

The artwork of others is also present, but this particular artist is the featured illustrator, handling the lead story in most of the issues. He illustrated every page of the *Autry* #75, and almost all of the *Johnny Mack Brown* #2, but it is possible that even the sharpest eye in comic book fandom might not credit the same artist with having done both magazines. Therein lies comic book history and the profile of a pro.

Missing (still) from the stack is *Dell Four Color Comics* #66 (1945 Gene Autry), the very first comic book assignment this artist ever received. He was working at the Walt Disney Studios at the time as a story man, and was recruited by Carl Buettner, an art editor at Whitman Publishing Company (and also the creator, author/artist of the fondly remembered Bucky Bug in *Walt Disney Comics*). The newly recruited illustrator was soon working on Dell titles other than the Autry and Brown westerns, but his development from earliest attempts to mature style is most clearly shown in these two.

Like tracing the evolution of the T-Bird out of the Model-T, it is possible to follow this artist through this eight inch stack of comics as he learned and mastered the art of comic book illustration.

His earliest steps, then ... the Four Color Autrys: Each page has four lines of panels, usually with two panels per line, rather than the three line, six panel page common today. An adventure illustrator is at a disadvantage in this format. Eight panels per page can all too easily seem overcrowded and the panels too small. But one of this artist's greatest distinctions—simplicity—keeps his eight panel pages from seeming crowded. There is none of the terrible overcrowding of detail prevalent on too many comic book pages.

Aside from a fine avoidance of unnecessary detail, the artwork is rather rough and crude, and the characters are not too appealing; but the style is reminiscent of no one else. The handling of black areas and wrinkles is somewhat in the Sickles/Caniff tradition, but there is no copying at all from these two masters. The storytelling is straightforward and clear, without any attempt at unusual angles, attention-getting close-ups or any pyro-techniques whatever.

Here, then, in his very first comic books, this artist showed the major traits that have been his ever since: absolute originality of drawing style, smooth consistent storytelling, and an all-too-rare simplicity.

How did this artist's work compare to others on the stands at that time? He couldn't have cared less! He studied Caniff in the Sunday pages and in several Popular reprints, he has said, but never studied any of the other comic book artists' work. He soon stopped looking at even those he himself had illustrated.

This was a very independent and original artist. He consciously chose the direction he wished his art to go ... and he went. He has occasionally shifted emphasis within his basic directions, but the main course is as clear as tracks in fresh snow.

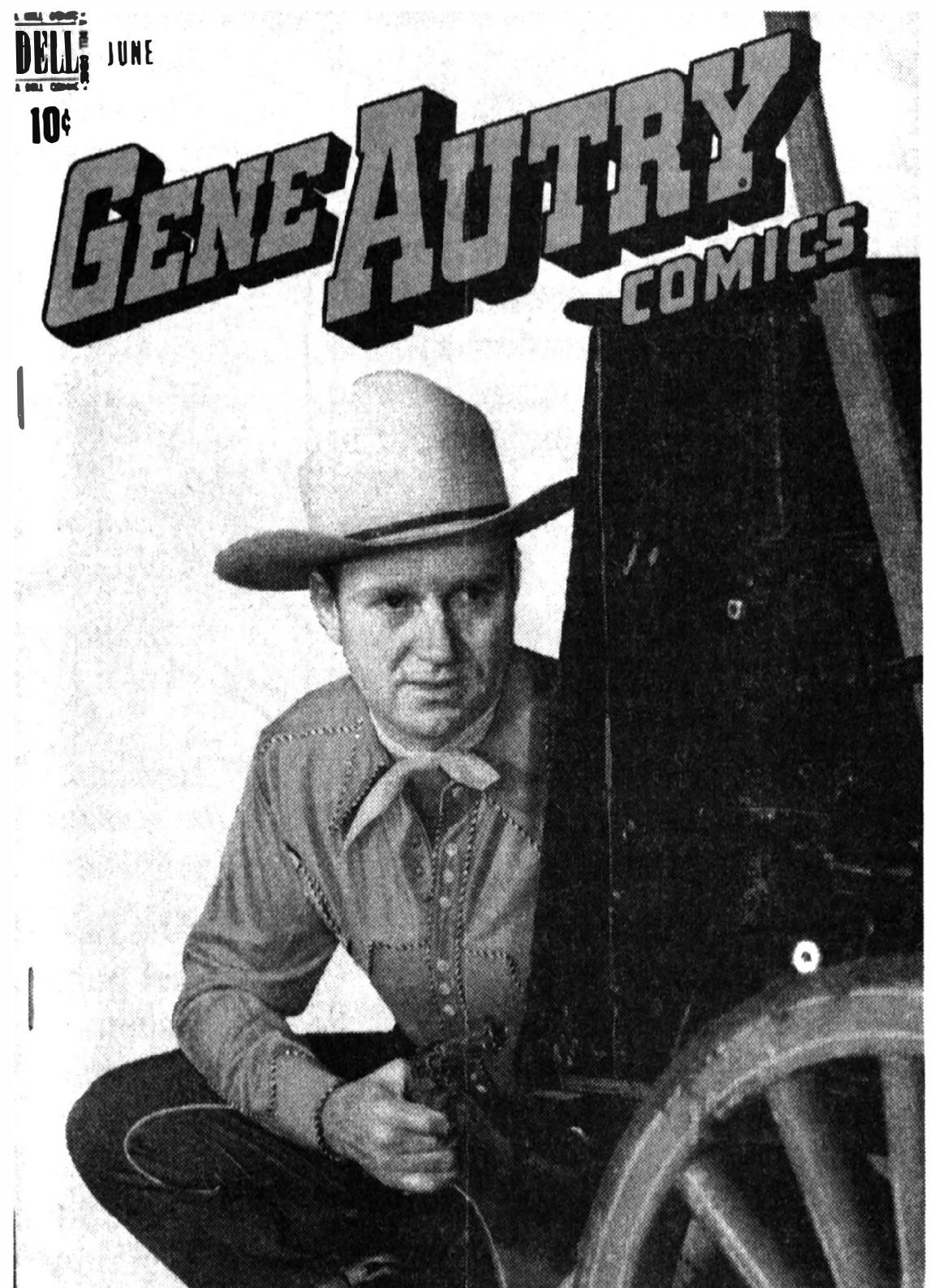
# MODEL T

to

## T-Bird

by Russ Manning

From *Batmania* #1 (1964)



Gene Autry #16 (June 1948)

Evidently the *Four Color* one-shots sold satisfactorily. A regular series began, with *Gene Autry* #1 (May-June 1946), and our artist's work is smoother, his characters are more firm, and the foreshortening is more convincing. Here for the first time, too, there are glimmers of yet another trait, one in which the artist fairly shines: design. In what is perhaps an oversimplification, comic book/strip artwork can be divided into two basic divisions: composed and designed. It would take too long to define the difference between the





Page from Gene Autry #16 by the Mystery Artist

two, but basically Hal Foster's panels are superbly composed, while Chester Gould's show fine (though perhaps unconscious) design. Our artist has a very fine sense of design, and *Autry* #1 begins to show it. The second story in this magazine was done by someone else and it is obvious that our artist was called in to do corrections.

The artwork in *Autry* #3 falls apart. Too tight a deadline, perhaps.

#5 is back on the main line of steady improvement, as are #6 through #10. The opening panels in #6 and #8 are very fine, beautifully designed; the one in #8 is pure essence of the western.

The opening panel in #11 is a knockout, a superb design and for once, very effective color ... and the

magazine has gone to the three line, six panel page format. The larger panels seemed to have agreed with the artist. His panels become downright dramatic, the towns become three-dimensional, and the characters, including a lovely girl, are very fine. The artist now has to create and render two less panels per page, and he evidently used the gift of time to further improve his art. The likenesses of Autry are more heroic (an almost hopeless task), and the story itself is almost interesting.

How well the comic book script is written greatly influence most illustrators. At its simplest, scene following scene following scene of two people just talking gives the artist little chance of keeping the reader's

interest. Conversely, when the script has lively action and sparkling dialogue, a good illustrator feels like doing his very best. The editor, of course, would have the opposite; the poorest script needs the best artwork, while a fine script can carry poor art!

Who wrote the Autrys? It isn't possible to check Whitman's files, but the artist has said that Eleanor Packer wrote many of the scripts he illustrated, and that lady is still writing some of the dullest, least imaginative, most talkative scripts conceivable, as long after as 1962. I believe I detect the style of Dick Calkins, Senior (yep, the Dick Calkins of Buck Rogers) in the better stories; chiefly in the later Autrys and best Johnny Mack Browns. Calkins definitely wrote many Red Ryder scripts in the early 1950s, and I strongly suspect his hand in the most interesting Autrys and Browns. Elizabeth Beecher was also scripting westerns and movie adaptations in the early 1950s, and she, too, may have done some of the more imaginative stories.

With #11, the Autry magazine became a monthly, and the time gap between Autry assignments had virtually disappeared. The artist's drawing becomes steadily smoother, his handling of western scenery and characters is becoming exceptional. No other western comic book of that period approaches the best of these early Autrys for excellence in depicting the American Southwest. Red Ryder might, but Harmon's work is comic *strip*, with the additional time and money for careful creation.

Then, a bombshell! The difference between the drawing in #15 and #16 is startling! If this artist had continued to use the drawing style he suddenly springs in #16, he might today be the most copied originator in the field.

His use of design, heretofore subordinated to realism, suddenly breaks through, and every figure, every shape, is designed. The artist uses much less black shading to show form, but indicates depth by the careful juxtaposition of shapes. Clear-cut, finely designed shapes fit within and against each other in a quite unique illusion of reality, and the overall impression is very pleasant. A young girl is handled particularly well.



Again, the artist has done the original. I don't remember anything like this style in any other comic book or strip. It may have come partially from a study of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French painter-draftsman, Ingres, who our artist had long admired, but it most likely reflects his own particular beliefs and way of seeing. The element of design is strong in all of his work, and here in #16 it is set winging free.

Incredibly enough, in the back pages of #16 this fine style is beginning to weaken, and by #17 has disappeared. Why? I suspect that arch-nemesis of all comic book illustrators: *time*. This particular style would require far more careful lay-out and rendering, and it is probably that deadlines necessitated a less demanding way of working. Deadlines ... and an opportunity too good to pass up.

As the most consistent and reliable adventure illustrator Whitman had been able to find, he now had the opportunity to make more money than he ever had before, and he made the most of it. He appreciated fine books and expensive sports cars, and the only way to achieve them at the page rate Whitman was paying was by long hours at the drawing board, and incredible drawing speed. Almost anyone can chain themselves to the board, but entirely without assistance, this artist was soon penciling, lettering, and inking an average of two complete adventure comic books per month!

Yet look at these Autry pages. Rushed, they are at times, but it is not the design and storytelling that suffer. Page after page, story after story, even where most evidently pinched by deadlines, his work is strong, the drawing is firm ... and the magazines sold.

#17 through #21 appear to have been penciled somewhat similarly to #16. Once achieved, the basic style would not be easy to forget, and for some artists, penciling, rather than inking, comes closer to their fundamental way of seeing, thinking. The inking style of #17 - #21 is too heavy and swiftly done to match the unique images of #16.

#22 through #26 have other artists on the lead story, with our artist doing the short stories in the back of the book (except #26, wherein he does not appear at all). I do not know the name of the artist in #22, but in #23 it



Panels from Johnny Mack Brown #2 (1950)

is Nicholas Firfires—a fine art painter of western scenes who went back to his easel in Santa Barbara when *Gene Autry* ceased being published.

In #27 our artist returns for a one night stand, and a great one. For the first time, the story itself is interesting from a viewpoint other than the classic ranch-town-sheriff-hero bit ... with a wild old man who lives with a bear, Indians, and an exciting storyline. Our artist is unrushed and consistent. #16 was an unexpected tour de force that weakened; #27 comes off perfectly.

From #28 to #37 it is sometimes Firfires, sometimes our artist, on the lead story. Of this group perhaps only #34 approaches the quality of #27, with some unusual characters and use of textures. It also features a petite blonde who bears a close resemblance to Sybil, a young lady the artist knew at the time.

#37 is the last *Gene Autry* the artist was featured in. He did the second stories in #39 (wonderful artwork of a New Orleans setting) and #40; but by the time he was no longer drawing Autry. He was illustrating *Johnny Mack Brown*.

In my opinion, *Johnny Mack Brown* #2 is the best western illustration this artist has done. It may be the best artwork he has done in *any* comic book. It may even be the most truly "western" comic book *anyone* has done!

It benefits from a fine script, in the classic western mold: a tenderfoot who turns on Johnny after Johnny

Mack makes a man of him ... hidden wealth on a ranch ... a pretty gal ... everything's there. The illustration is bed-rock simple. The characters are real working westerners, unglorified, and the panels breathe sun and dust and saddle-sweat in as fine a visual representation of the half true/half legend southwest as it has ever received. Perhaps others have shown us a more universally accepted image of the cowboy hero, but it is interesting to imagine what this artist might have done had he not had to use these carry-over heroes from the silliest, most untrue uses the movies ever made of the cowboy legend.

With *Johnny Mack Brown* #9 this artist left the westerns to concentrate on other comic books for Dell, and comic strips for Walt Disney. Over the years, his western illustrating has appeared very intermittently in Buck Jones, Rex Allen, Annie Oakley, Jesse James and Range Rider, and none of them exhibit the drawing and strong feeling for the theme as does *Johnny Mack Brown* #2.

His work changed quite drastically in the mid-1950s; a change that would seem to be largely responsible for the present day rejection of his work by so many comic book fans. That it may be only that special breed of cat—the fan—who is rejecting his work might be inferred from the fact that the comic book that carries his work today is one of the best selling on the stands, and that his work was in the incredibly



successful *Davy Crockett* (good for eight million copies sold in its very short life).

How can this artist who is so criticized by fandom, this paragon of speed who once illustrated *nine* complete pages in one very long working day, this man who never looks at a comic book, especially ones he himself has done ... how can this artist, despite these seeming handicaps, produce best-selling comic books?

Perhaps it isn't the whole answer, but the simple fact may be that he is a fine natural artist who can *tell a story originally*. Especially here in the later issues of this eight inch stack of comic books, the beautifully designed, strong, simple panels tell a story as well as any have ever been told in the comic book form. While we can't always identify ourselves completely with his heroes, they are not copies of any other that ever existed. His style is unique, and at this date in comic book/strip art, how rare that is!

Where does this artist rank in the pantheon of comic book greats? My own opinion is that we have yet to see the heights to which his earlier, better work will be prized. The passage of time tends to confer the favor of approval on the strong, the simple, and the truly original. We still stand too close, perhaps but I strongly suspect that time will certainly favor this artist's work and reputation; though the artist, it would seem, could hardly care less.

\*

For those fans who haven't already guessed, and for those who do not have a like stack of comics wherein to trace his art to the recognizable mature style, and for those collectors whose alter-egos are searchers after comic book esoterica ... a very dissolute-looking character is inscribing this artist's name on a tombstone in panel 1, page 9, of *Johnny Mack Brown* #3 (Jan.-Mar. 1951).

— Russ Manning

*Editor's Note: The article was originally published without artwork, or the revelation that the artist in question was Jesse Marsh, who is perhaps most associated with the Dell Tarzan comics. I have chosen to present "Model T to T-Bird" accompanied by Marsh's artwork, which dilutes the articles "mystery" but will be (I feel) more satisfying to the reader.*

## Postscript by Richard Kyle

From *Fantasy Illustrated* #6 (1966)

Jesse Marsh died last April 29<sup>th</sup> at the age of fifty. He was one of the finest artists the graphic story has known. For almost twenty years he had drawn the Tarzan-for-younger readers that was featured in Gold Key's earlier *Tarzan* series. Although his conception of Tarzan was very different from that of Edgar Rice Burroughs, it was ideally suited to the magazine's audience. His Tarzan was strong, almost stern in the later years, but simple and fundamentally gentle—wholly lacking the savagery and barbarism that lay beneath the skin of Burrough's Lord Greystoke. Marsh himself seems to have shared many of those same qualities.

During his last year on *Tarzan*, Marsh introduced a group of revolutionary graphic story techniques. Discarding traditional, mechanical perspective, he investigated a truer and more natural form, one that drew upon the actual image the eye receives as it looks out at the world. Superficially distorted, the drawings became fully three-dimensional when the method was understood; and unlike conventional perspective, the viewer did not look upon the scene as an observer, but was taken into it as a participant—as though he had moved from the audience onto the stage itself. Marsh once explained his methods as "an attempt to do with black-and-white"—the tones he worked with as an artist: comic book color is applied in the printing process—"what Cezanne did with color." The attempt was largely successful, and had he continued in the medium, it might have powerfully

influenced the development of the graphic story, and the field of illustration, as well. He left *Tarzan* with the October 1965 issue. At that time, he said he intended to devote himself exclusively to the fine arts. His death, however, was described in *The Gridley Wave*, a news publication of the Burroughs Bibliophiles, as due to diabetes and its complications, and so, perhaps, his health forced his retirement from the graphic story. He had recently submitted a novel to Dell books as an entrant in their \$10,000 contest.

I spoke to him by telephone, late last year, regarding his graphic story work. I had understood that Cezanne's painting had an especial attraction for children, and I asked him if he'd had a similar response to his *Tarzan* stories. There was a note of singular regret in his voice when he replied that he did not know, that he had no children of his own. He did, though, of course. He had twenty years of them. Increasingly, they will be remembered and sought out—especially those at the beginning of his graphic story career and those at the very end, the last brilliant tales of his Tarzan.

A forthcoming issue of *The Burroughs Bibliophiles* will cover his full career, but it is unlikely a finer estimate of Marsh's early work will be written than Russ Manning's "Model-T to T-Bird," which appeared in *Batmania* #1, for July 1964—an examination and appreciation of Marsh's first stories, those for Dell's western comic books.

-end-



TWO CARRIER PILOTS...ON THEIR WAY TO COMBAT...WONDERING ABOUT THE FUTURE...NOT KNOWING HOW IT WILL BE TIED UP WITH...

# The BRIDGES



THEY WATCHED THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE FADE INTO THE MIST...THEIR LAST LINK WITH HOME...

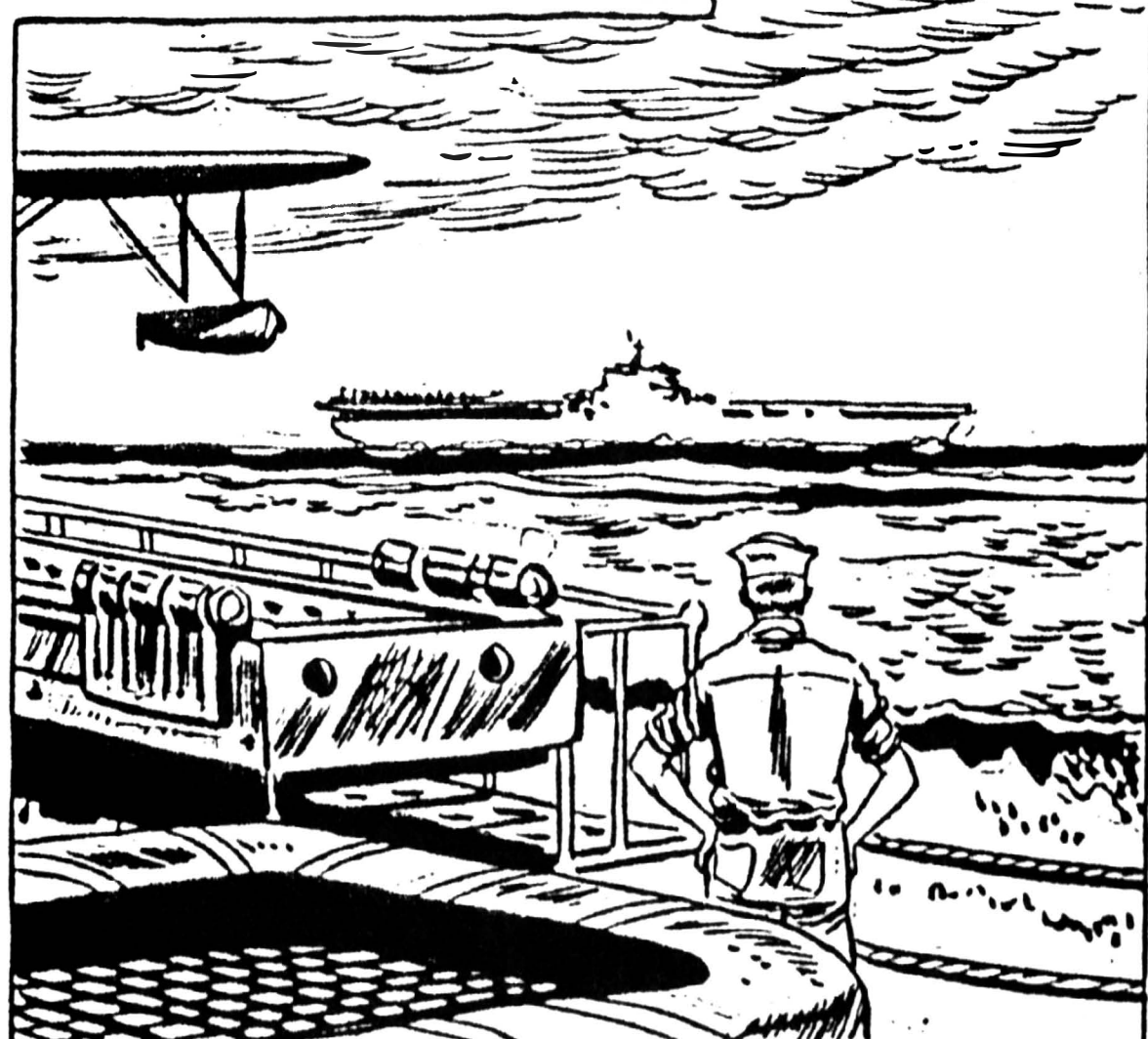


From Naval Patrol #4 (1955)

Art by Jesse Marsh

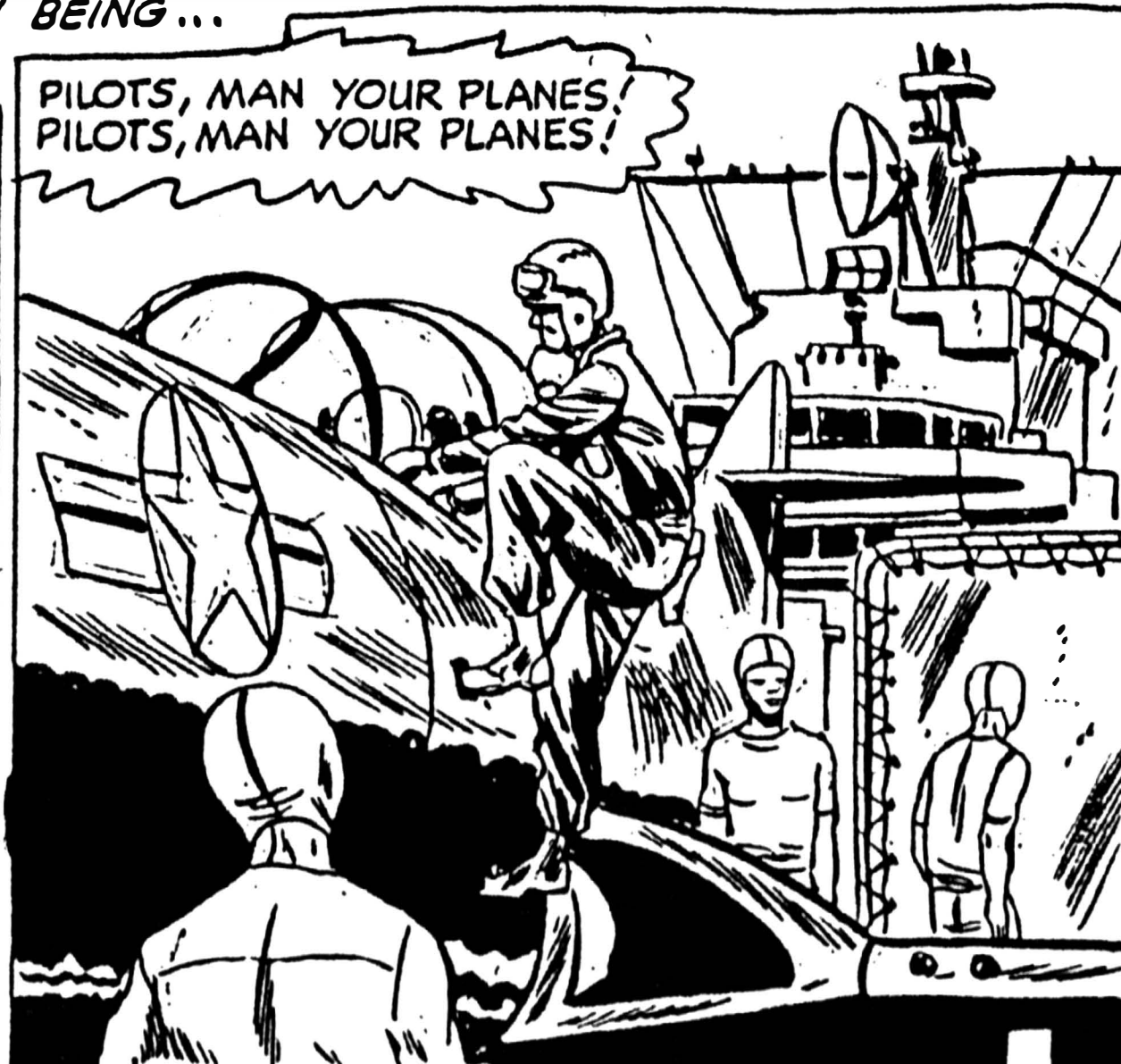


DAYS LATER THE CARRIER WAS CRUISING IN KOREAN WATERS... ARMED JETS STOOD READY TO BE THROWN AT THE ENEMY... GONE WERE ALL THOUGHTS OF THE BRIDGE...

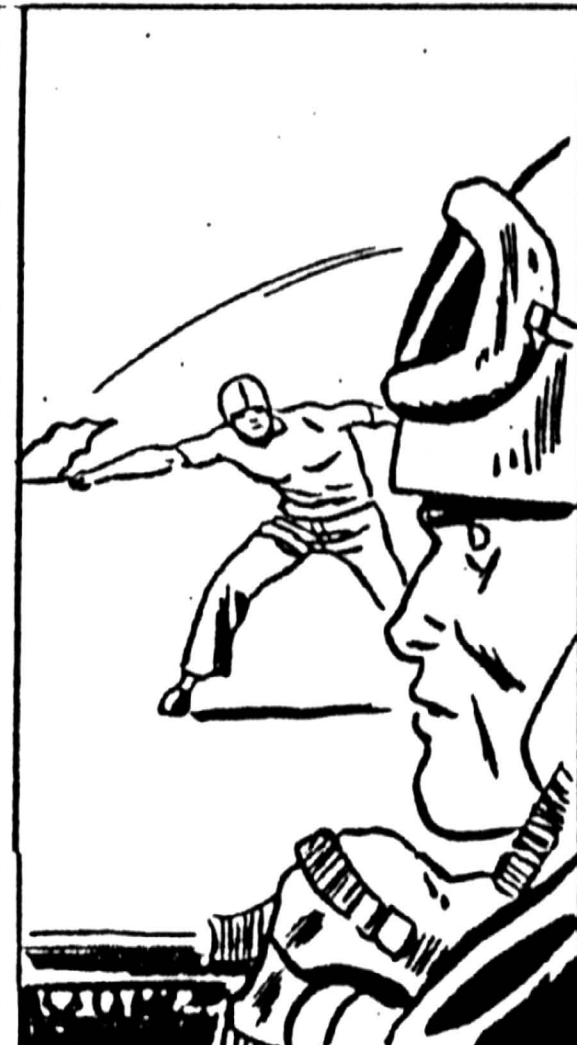
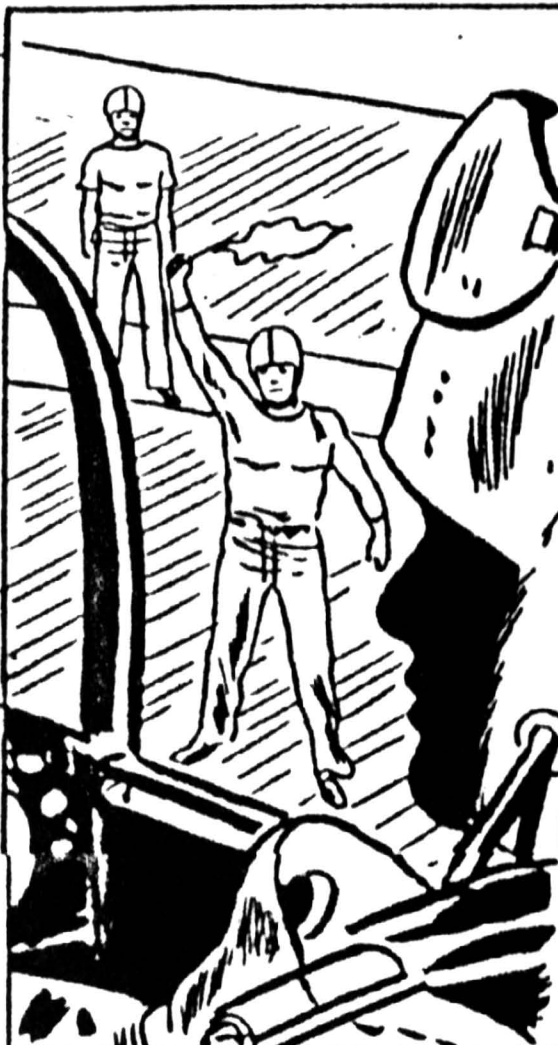


THIS WAS IT! THIS WAS THE REASON FOR THEIR BEING...

PILOTS, MAN YOUR PLANES!  
PILOTS, MAN YOUR PLANES!



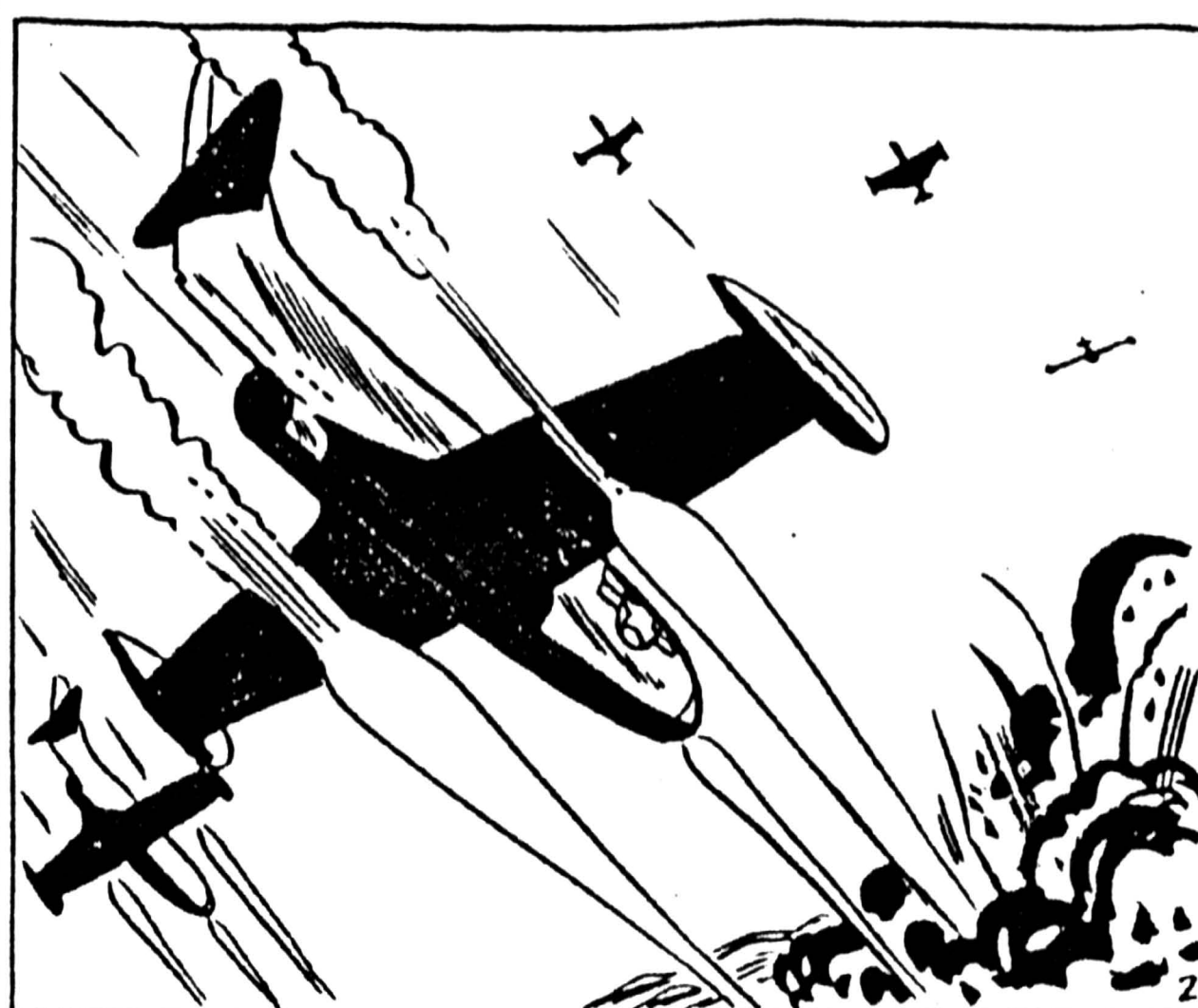
SWOOSH FOLLOWED SWOOSH AS THE JETS BLASTED THEIR WAY INTO THE BLUE SKY... ROAR AFTER ROAR ROCKED THE CARRIER... THEN THEY WERE GONE FROM SIGHT... HEADING NORTH... TOWARD THE ENEMY...



THEY PASSED THE CHECKPOINTS... AND THE HIGH ELEMENT ALTERED COURSE... TWO MINUTES TO TARGET!

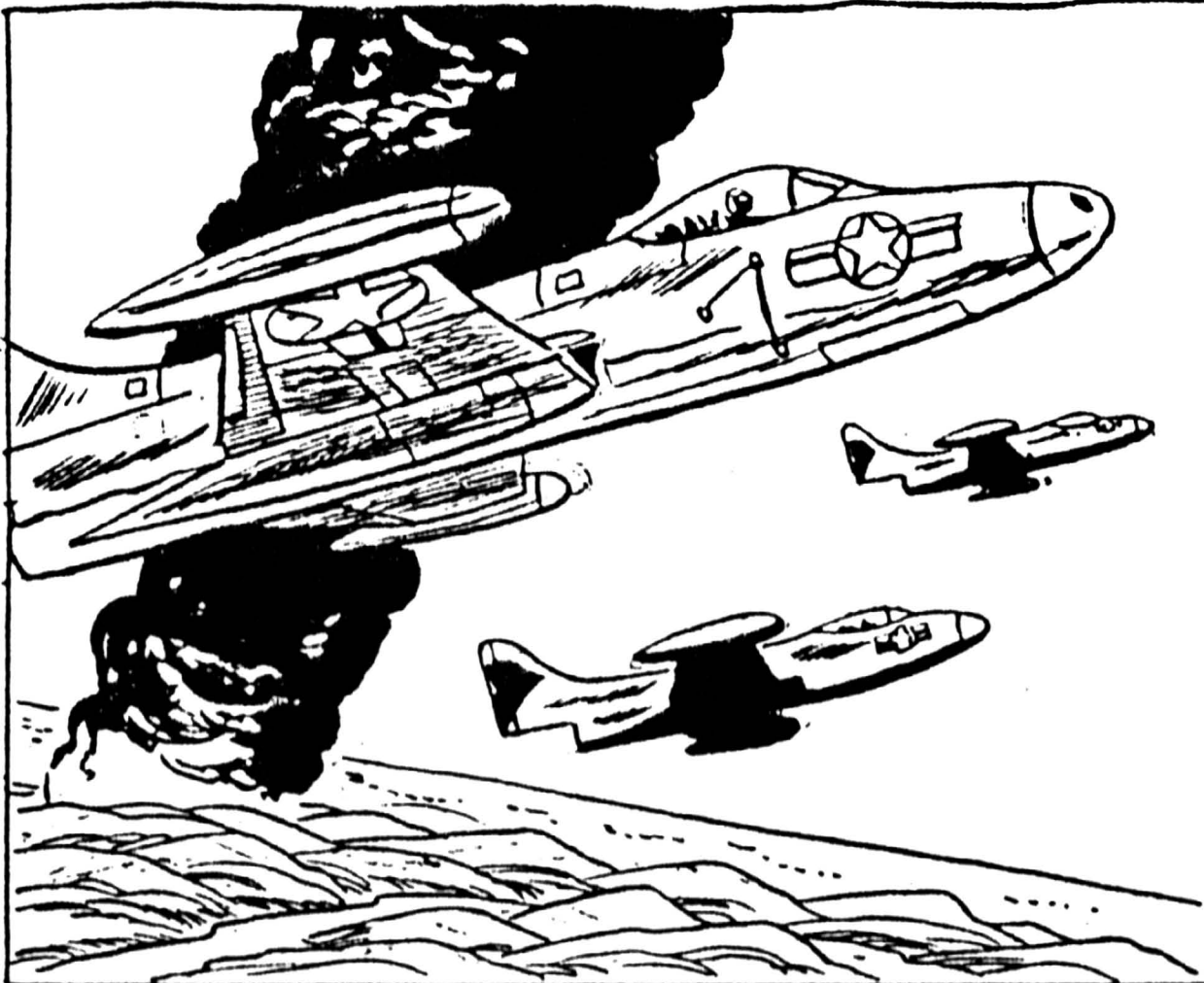


DOWN... DOWN... DOWN THEY ROARED... ROCKETS BLASTING OUT FROM UNDER THE WINGS... MACHINE GUNS BLINKING... FOR THE TARGET LAY BENEATH THEM!





IN THREE MINUTES IT WAS ALL OVER! THREE TORRID MINUTES! FOR AS THEY TURNED, THE BLACK SMOKE AND FLAMES BELCHED FROM THE AREA...THE TARGET HAD BEEN WELL SATURATED!



IT HAD BEEN EASY... MAYBE TOO EASY... AND AS THEY FACED THE BRIEFING OFFICER THE NEXT DAY... BOMBING WAS GOOD ON YESTERDAY'S MISSION... BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH! YOUR NEXT MISSION WILL HAVE TO BE PERFECT... YOU WON'T GET A CHANCE FOR A RERUN...

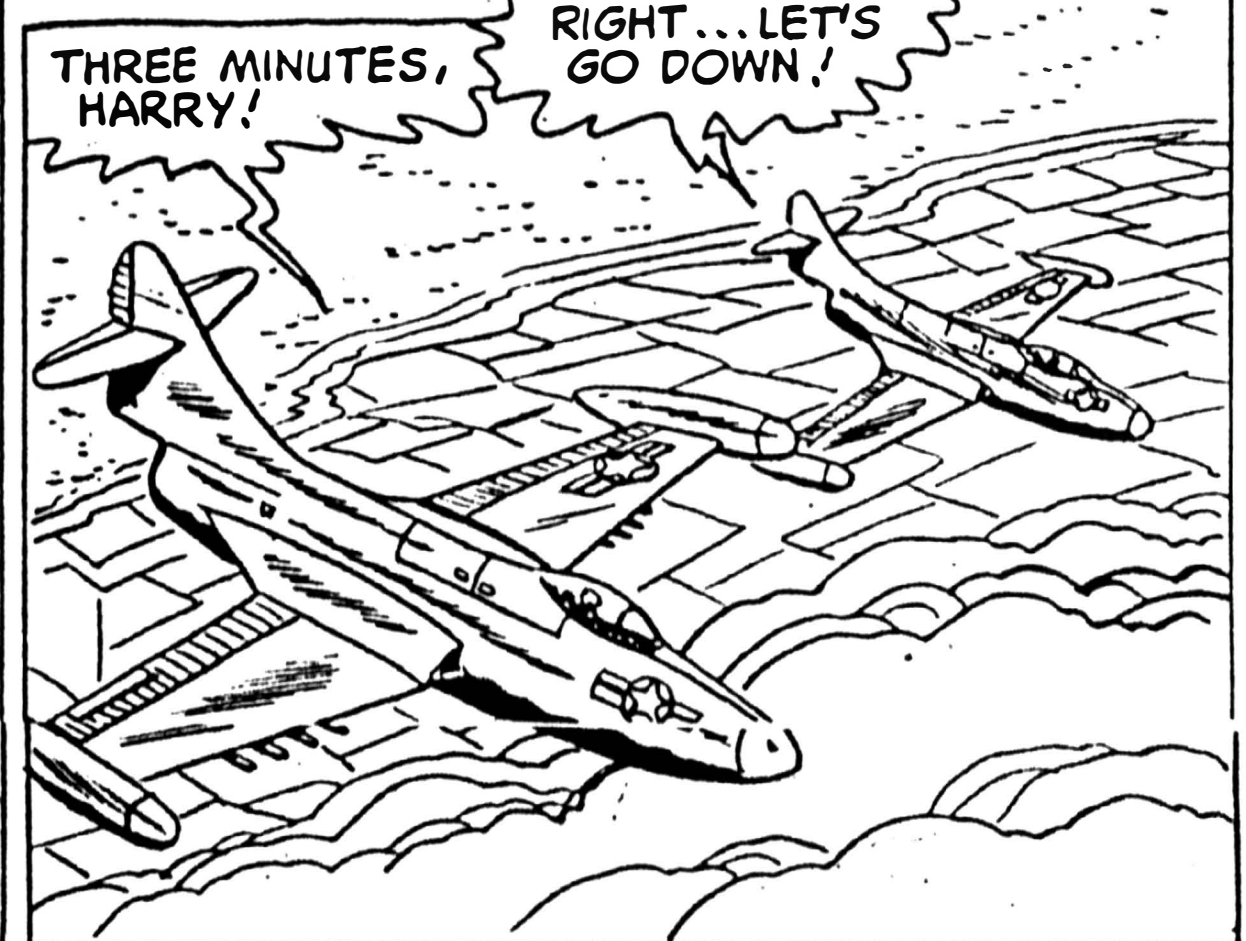


THEN HE TOLD THEM...TOLD THEM ABOUT THE BRIDGE...THE OTHER BRIDGE...

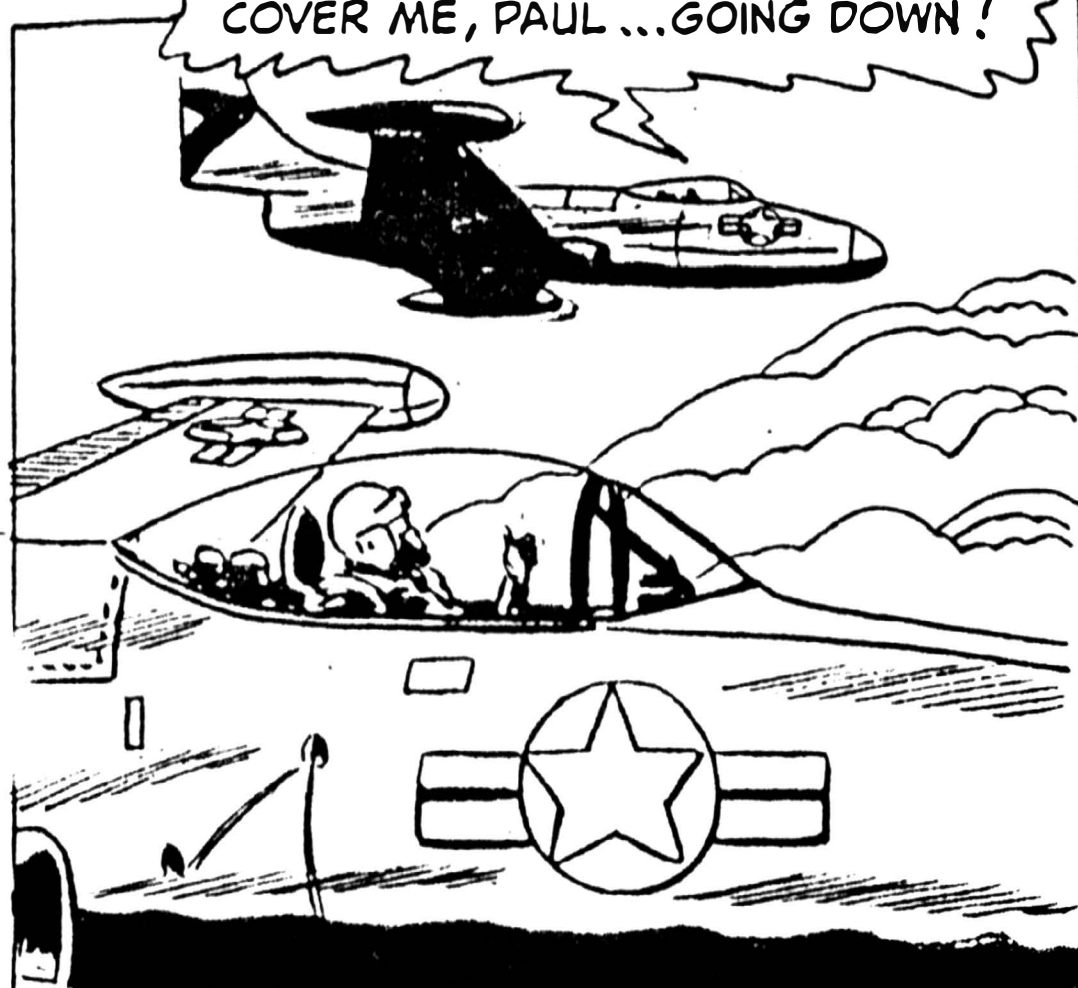
IT HAS TO BE KNOCKED OUT...THEY'VE BEEN POURING TROOPS AND SUPPLIES OVER IT... WITHOUT IT, IT WOULD TAKE THEM DAYS TO GET THEM TO THE FRONT...OUR JOB...GET IT!



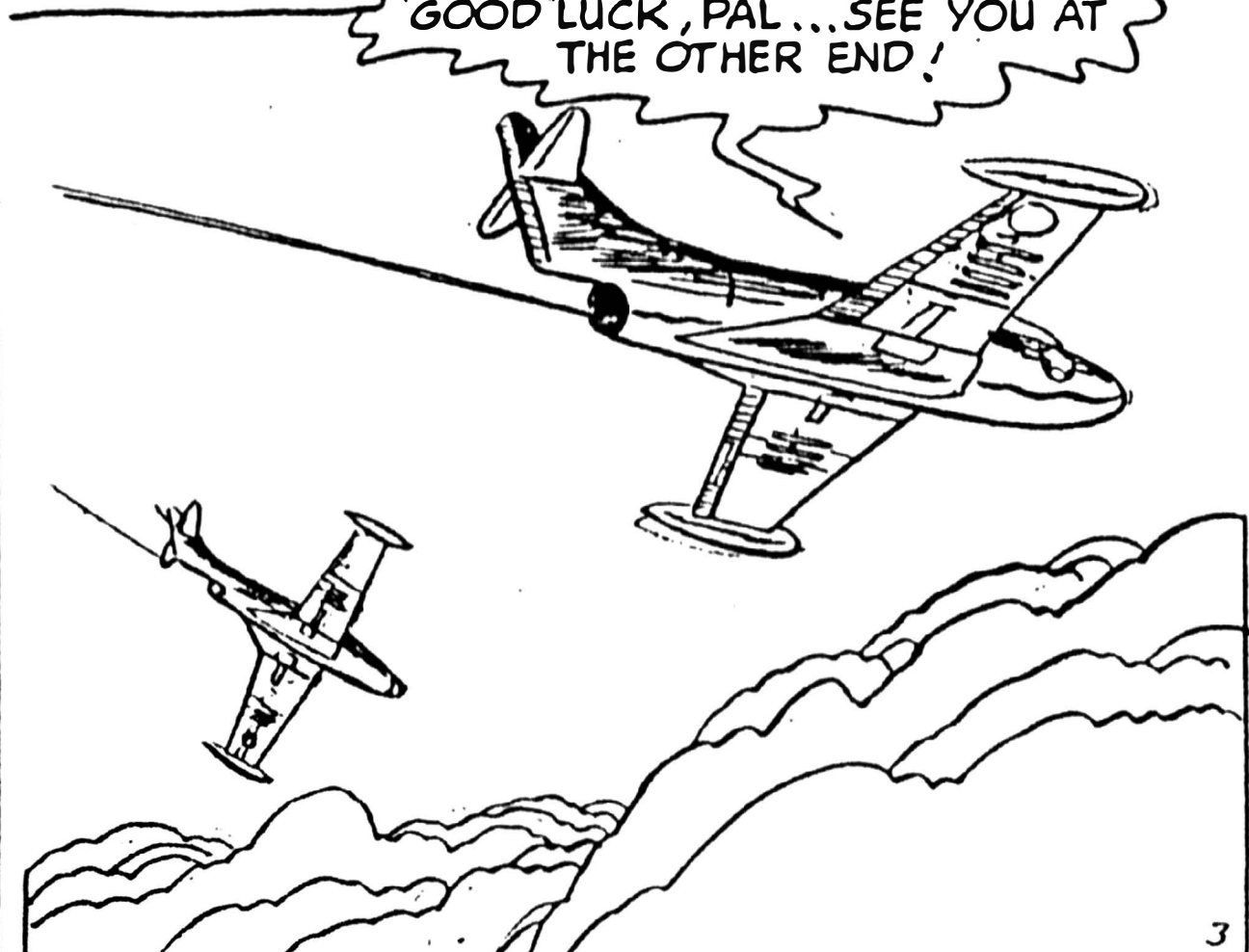
BUT GETTING IT WASN'T GOING TO BE EASY...WORD HAD FILTERED DOWN AS TO THE HEAVY FORTIFICATIONS...AND THE NEXT DAY OUR TWO PILOTS FOUND THEMSELVES WINGING NORTHWARD TO TEST THOSE FORTIFICATIONS...



THEY APPROACHED THE TARGET...GLISTENING BELOW THEM...SILENT... BUT WAS IT REALLY THAT SILENT...ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...

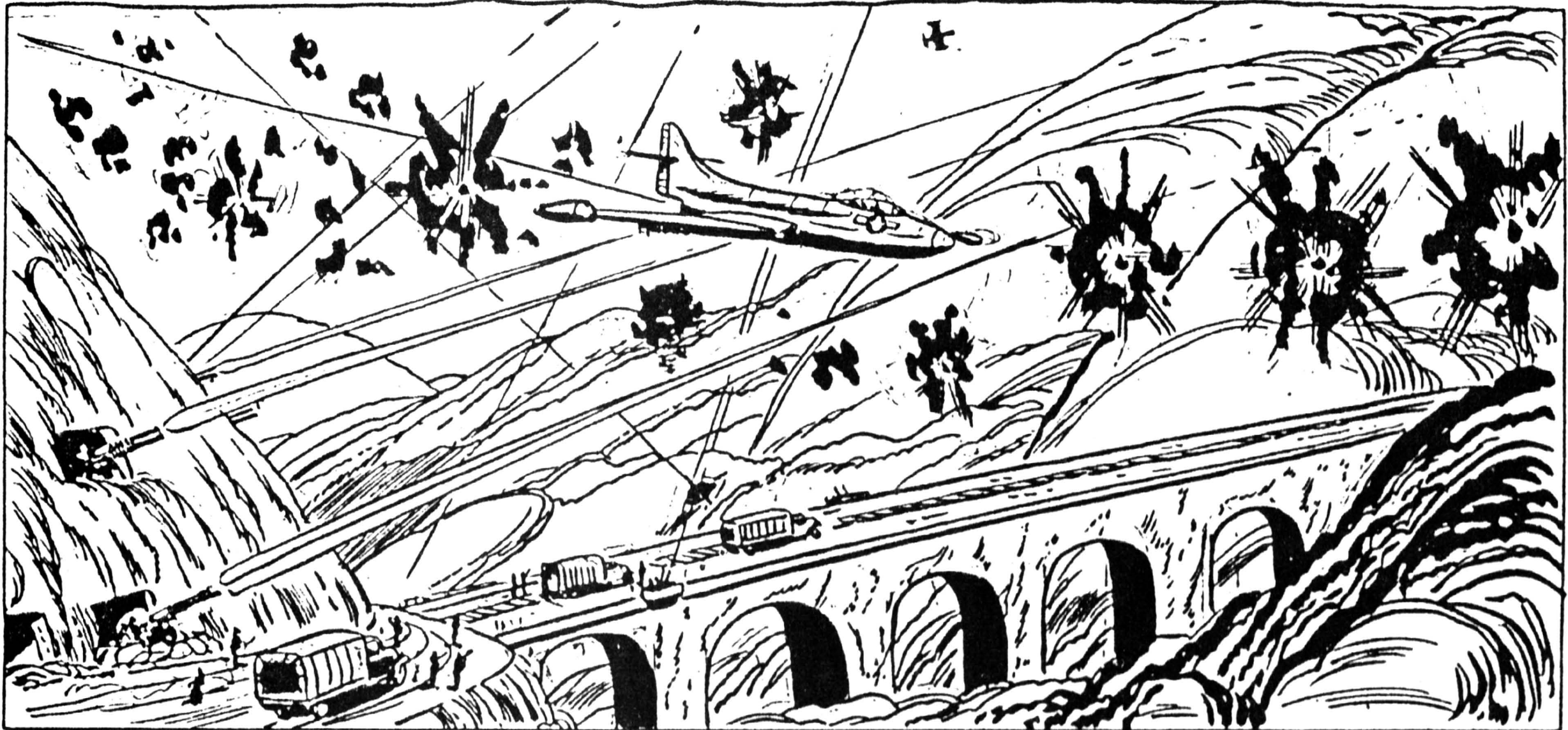


THAT WAS THE WAY TO FIND OUT...GO DOWN FOR A LOOK...ROAR THROUGH THAT CUT AND SPOT THOSE GUNS...SOUNDS EASY, DOESN'T IT...FOLLOW HIM DOWN AND FIND OUT!





SUDDENLY THE SILENCE WAS ENDED... THE BLUE SKY TURNED BLACK AS FLAK GUNNERS POUNDED AT THE ROARING JET... THE VERY HILLS ERUPTED WITH THEIR FLASHES...



WORDS COULDN'T DESCRIBE IT... THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT... RUN THE GAUNTLET OF THOSE GUNS...



NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE IT! REAL ROUGH!

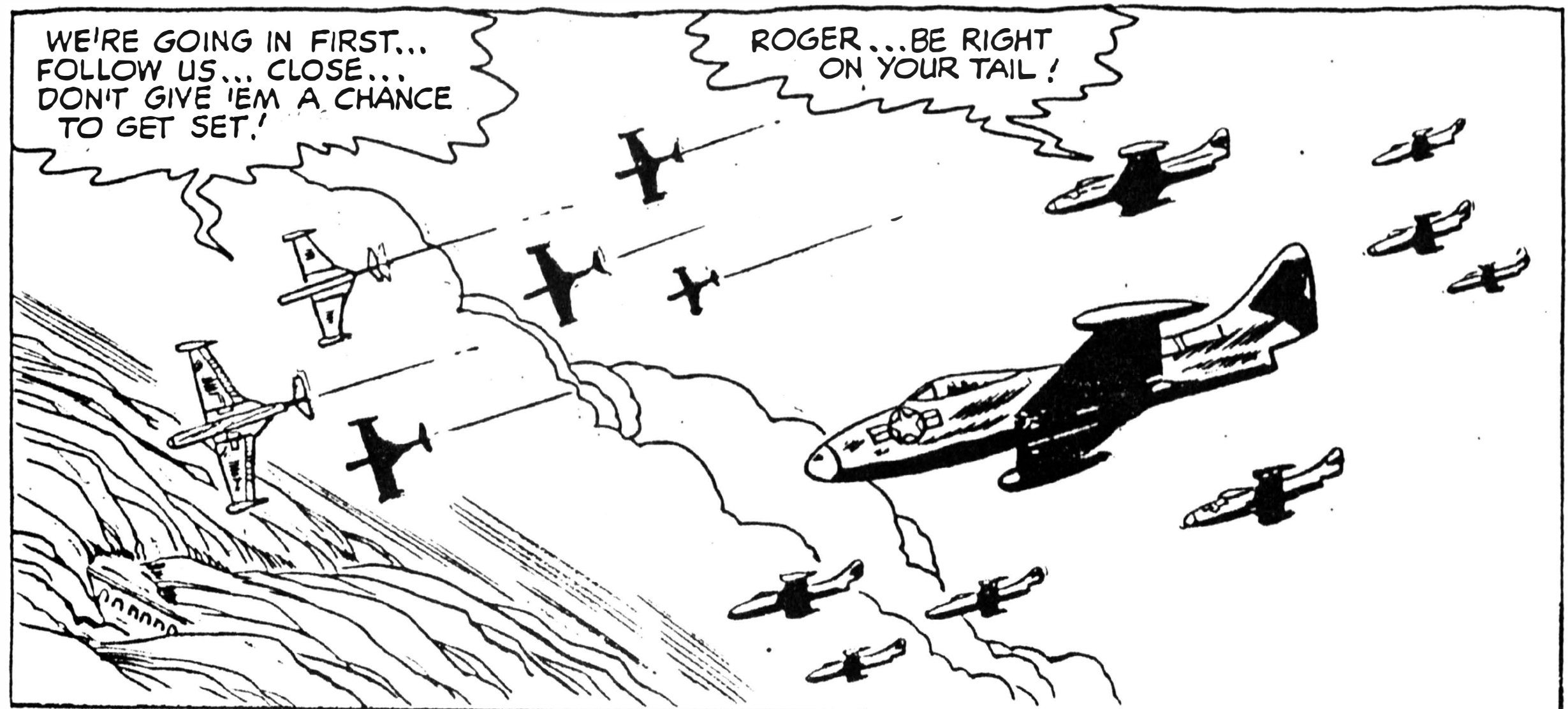
NOTHING LIKE IT...

ONE THING HELD THEM UP... THE WEATHER... AND THOSE IDLE DAYS GAVE THEM PLENTY OF TIME TO THINK OF THE BRIDGE... THE BRIDGE THAT HAD TO BE DESTROYED... BUT THAT COULD JUST AS EASILY DESTROY THEM...



LET'S GO... WEATHER'S GOOD OVER TARGET!

IT WAS AN UNEVENTFUL TRIP TO THE BRIDGE... BUT THAT WOULD BE MADE UP FOR... MANY TIMES OVER... AND THEN THRU THE CLOUDS THEY SAW IT... GLISTENING... WAITING... WATCHING...

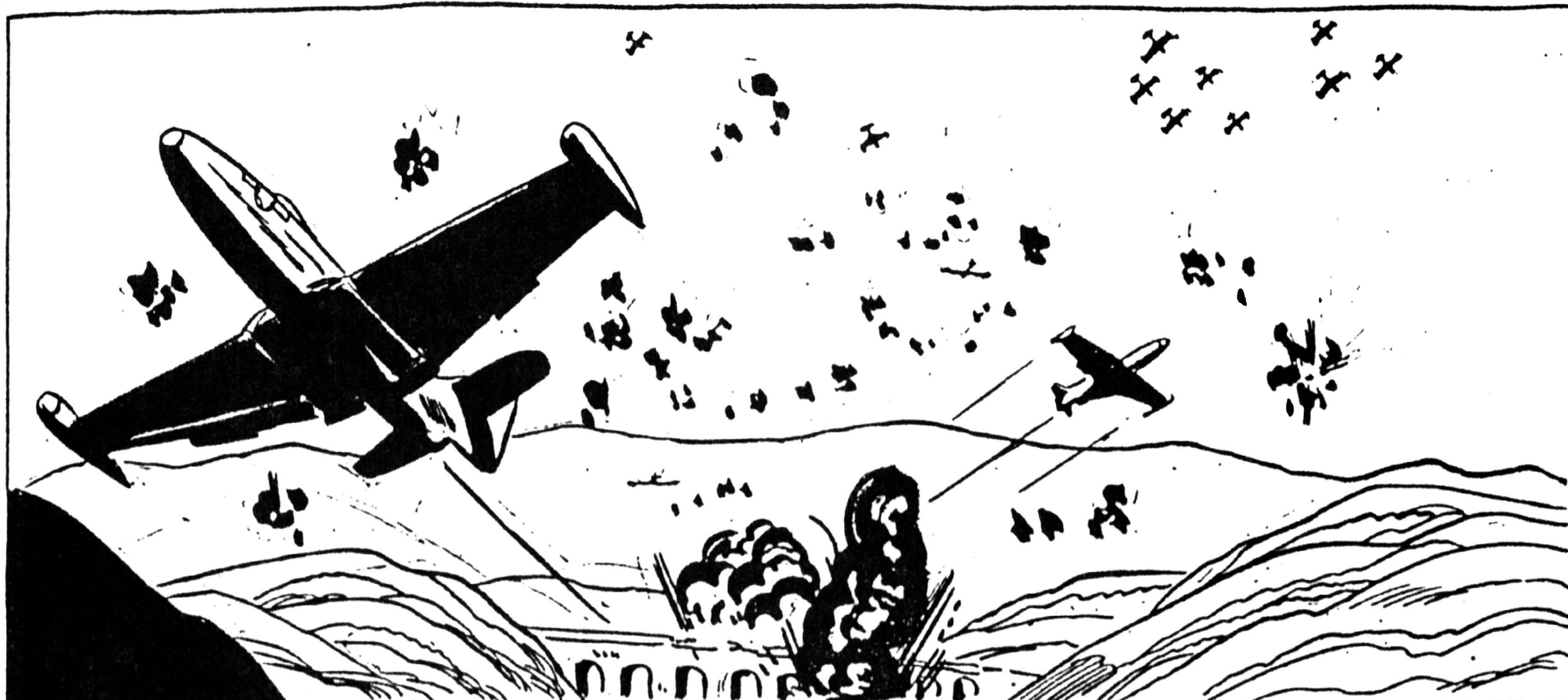


WE'RE GOING IN FIRST... FOLLOW US... CLOSE... DON'T GIVE 'EM A CHANCE TO GET SET!

ROGER... BE RIGHT ON YOUR TAIL!



THEY POUNDED THROUGH THE DEFILE... AND THE ENEMY GUNNERS WERE READY... THE UGLY BLACK PUFFS OF FLAK DARKENED THE SKIES... AND FOR A MOMENT THE NOISE WAS SO THICK THAT IT SEEMED AS IF THE ENTIRE WAR WAS CONCENTRATED IN THAT SMALL VALLEY!

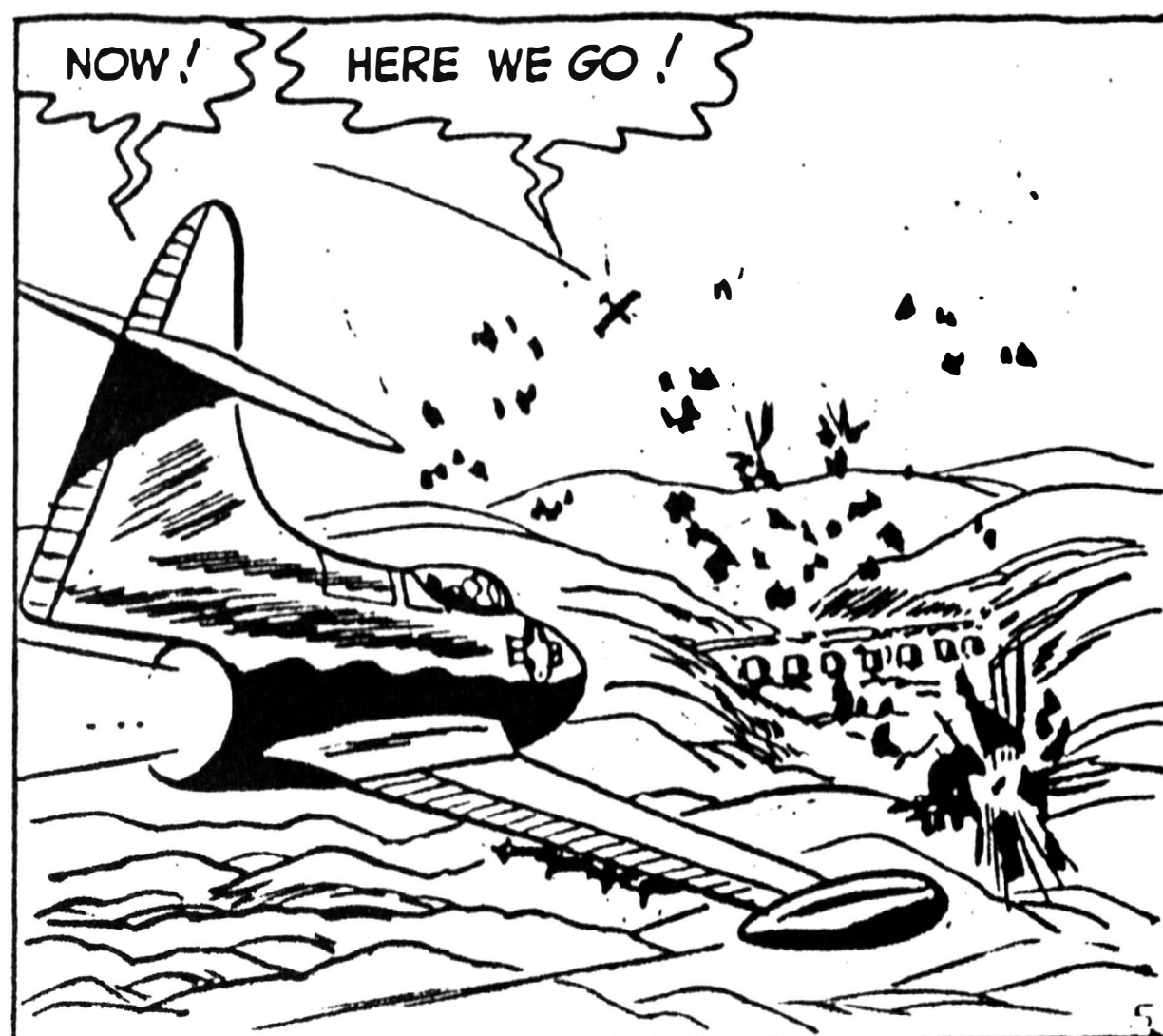
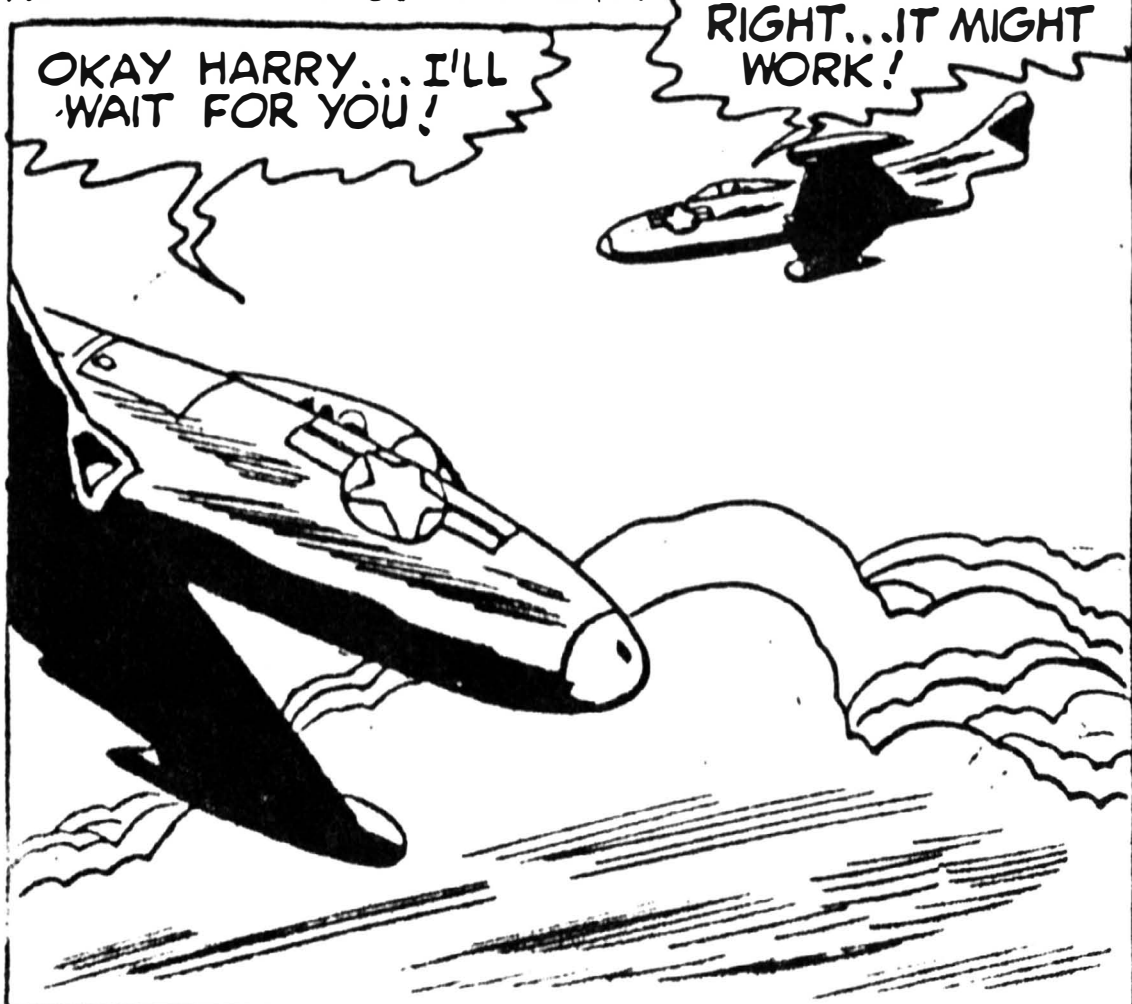


AND THEN THE HIGH ELEMENT... AND THE SCENE WAS DUPLICATED... ROUND AFTER ROUND WAS FIRED AT THE HIGH-FLYING JETS... WING GUNS BURNED OUT FROM HEAVY TRIGGER FINGERS... GEYSERS OF DIRT FLEW INTO THE AIR FROM BOMB CONCUSSIONS... AND THEN THEY TOO WERE THROUGH.



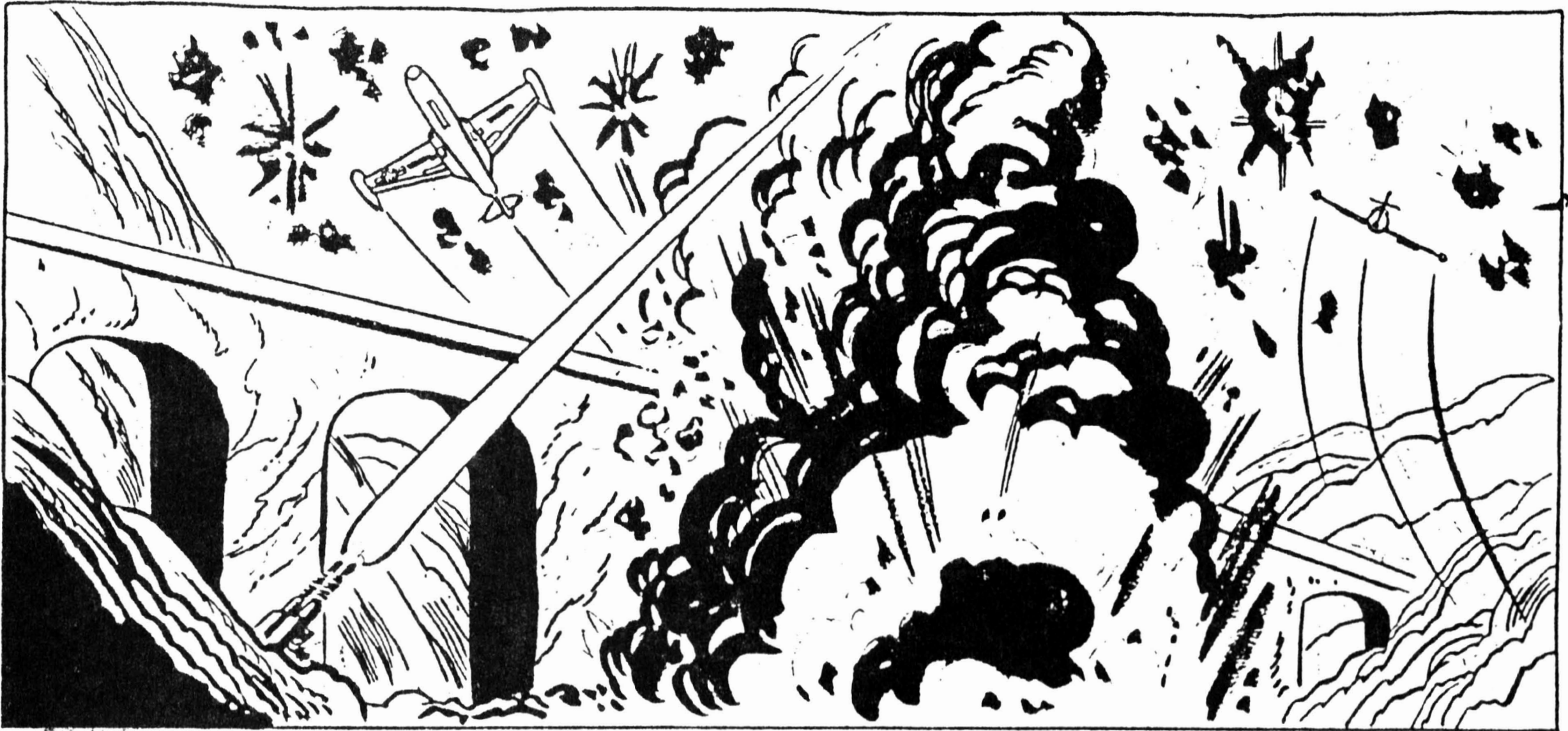
AND THROUGH ALL THE CANNONADING THE BRIDGE STILL STOOD... A DEFIANT MONUMENT... AND TWO JETS SLOWLY CIRCLED... THEY KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE...

IT WAS DARING... IT WAS DANGEROUS... BUT THE BRIDGE STILL STOOD... THEY HAD TO TRY IT...





FOR A MOMENT THEY CAUGHT THE ENEMY FLAK GUNNERS BY SURPRISE... FOR JUST ONE MOMENT... BUT THAT WAS ALL THEY NEEDED... ONE LONG MOMENT...



STEEL AND CONCRETE SUDDENLY CRUMPLED UNDER THE IMPACT OF THE ROCKETS... AND PLANS AND SCHEMES CRUMPLED WITH THEM... FOR NOW THE ENEMY TIMETABLE HAD BEEN DERAILED... ALL BECAUSE OF ONE BRIDGE...

TWO HAPPY PILOTS FLEW SIDE BY SIDE. AS THEY WINGED BACK TOWARD THE CARRIERS...



GOOD SHOOTIN', BOY!

NO BETTER THAN YOURS!

SOMEHOW WARS END... THE COMBAT CEASES... MEN RETURN HOME... WITH THEIR MEMORIES...

IT GLEAMED... IT GLISTENED... IT LOOKED DOWN AT THEM... IT BROUGHT BACK MEMORIES... THIS ENDS THE STORY OF THE BRIDGES... ONE OF PEACE... ONE OF WAR... BOTH THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE LIVES OF THESE TWO PILOTS!



HOW ABOUT THAT, IT'S STILL THERE!

YEAH... SURE LOOKS GOOD, DOESN'T IT?



END



**H**alloween! An evening when druids, denevers, virdulacs and other anthropophaghist hosts emerge from a world of midnight madness to cavort about on this, the highest of the high holidays.

And winging his way amongst them, straight from the pages of *Detective Comics* for a single night of mirthful merriment is the awesome figure of the mighty Batman.

At least that's what happens in Rutland, a Vermont community of some 18,000 souls, where Batman over the past few years has become the traditional trademark of the Rutland Recreation Department's annual Halloween Parade.

Every year, this parade has increased in scope, size and color, to a point where it is now the largest parade event of its type, not only in Rutland but throughout the entire state of Vermont as well.

Thousands now march over concrete pathways in Rutland City each Halloween Eve. Thousands more cram corners and jostle for viewing space as the procession hoves into view after the customary 6:30 p.m. starting time.

As the parade has grown, so too has Batman's important role in it. First the legendary crimefighter from Gotham was featured aboard one of the more spectacular float entries of that year.

But so popular was Batman's appearances, that John William Cioffredi, recreation commissioner, and this writer as the Department's Halloween committee chairman, decided to make the caped crime-crusher an annual parade personage.

Public response was such that after the second appearance of Batman, it was further decided to make him the trademark symbol of the marching extravaganza.

This year Batman was selected as parade marshal, a position which as long as the parades continue in Rutland, he will hold each and every Halloween.

Since Batman made his appearance in Rutland, the surrounding area parade-going public, has further been treated to the sight of the super-charged Batmobile prowling the march route.

Robin The Boy Wonder, fittingly enough, has taken his place alongside his fighting companion. Batwoman has appeared on the scene, joined anew



*Biljo White's uncanny emulation of the Moldoff/Paris style of the pre-New Look Batman comics from the early 1960s.*

this year by Bat-Girl. Even Bat-Mite has twice shown up for the Recreation Department's gloved salute to the Eve of All-Hallows. And at one time, Rutland's Batman was aided by a diminutive character, known as Belfry The Bat.

It was not ever so. How did this all come about when not even one of the Batman family took part in the first annual Halloween Parade in 1960? Quite by chance it happened. And this is the way it took place.

Always an enthusiastic parade watcher, himself, Rutland's Batman to be, stood shivering that cool crisp October night, having heard a parade was to pass by. With him was Belfry, a tiny miss, costumed and eager, to

watch on also. The fire whistle in the town below barked its command for the march to begin. And it did. School children from the elementary schools trooped into view. Music of two bands pepped up the procession of horrors and haunts. Cioffredi and the mayor of the time lead the way, riding aboard a jaunty jeep. Soon it was over—all too soon for the liking of Batman and Belfry.

"Could have been better," remarked Belfry as she and her adult companion walked home trick-and-treating along the way, and being pleasantly taken aback as a young boy suddenly whipped out a flaming jack o' lantern at them. "You're right," agreed Batman, "It could have,



indeed.” Thus an idea was born that night, an idea that would have ramifications on Rutland’s Halloween celebrations for years to come.

Everything was not crystallized at this point by any matter or means. Batman talked over the matter with this writer and together they took their idea to Cioffredi. Cioffredi was more than receptive for he had been searching for ways to make the upcoming second annual march “a better one, indeed.”

Being an “idea-man” is nice but one has to be prepared to carry them out when called upon to do so. When Commissioner Cioffredi asked this writer to serve as Halloween committee chairman, there was no turning back.

Neither could the Batman. He was in the action for keeps at Cioffredi’s command.

The idea had been to lend the parade a central figure, one that would incorporate the eeriness and excitement of a night like Halloween. Once this figure was established in the minds of the local parade going public, matters would continue from there, was the general consensus of opinion.

Such was to be the case as later events would prove. But hard work was involved and though it was a labor of love, at times it was to be a frustrating one.

Cioffredi agreed the selection of Batman as a parade symbol was an excellent one. It was decided to keep the identity of the Rutland figure a top priority secret. To this day the identities of all the Bat Family members who have appeared in the parades remain just that—secret, though there is much speculation concerning “Who Are They?”

Rutland’s Batman (he’s always played by the same man who suggested the idea in the first place) can recall buying and reading the first issue of *Detective Comics* (No. 27) that featured Batman. Though he lacks this issue, his collection is a large one including not only *Detective* issues but *World’s Finest*, *Batman*, *Star-Spangled Comics* that had Robin as lead feature, *All-Star Comics* and *Justice League of America Comics*, having Batman as a character. His prize possession is

*Detective Comics* No. 33 featuring Batman’s origin.

As National’s Batman is a lawman, so too is Rutland’s “Bruce Wayne For A Day.” The Rutland Batman is a duly sworn deputy sheriff. Other similarities include height of six-feet and weight of 180 pounds given as physical descriptions of Batman is one issue of *Detective Comics* long ago.

Thinking about being Batman is one thing, becoming him quite another. The first and most immediate problem was that of costuming. As Batman costumes are unavailable commercially, one had to be hand-made. Accomplishing this took time and patience. Willing hands stitched cape and cowl. Boots and gloves were outfitted with extra lengths of materials. The Bat chest emblem and utility belt were fashioned with items salvaged from closet and attic.

While this was taking place, this writer and others worked at a furious pace “Cabbage Night” (the evening before Halloween) past midnight and into the dawn to build the Batman float. The entire float project took all of Halloween afternoon to complete before the float trundled off to take its place in the 1961 parade line-up.

Batman, himself, was having his troubles. The last stitch of his costume was woven into place but the time was 6:21. Lacking a car, the Batman did the only thing he could do—run several city blocks to the parade site.

The fire whistle had already hooted its clarion call as the caped figure raced along darkened streets. His sudden appearance at various points caused adults and children to draw back and watch large-eyed at his passing. Cars braked to quick stops as the figure darted across intersections.

Out of breath, Rutland’s Batman arrived on the parade scene. There were cries of “Look, it’s Batman,” and “Hey, where’s Robin?”

As Batman took his place on the float he was greeted by Belfry, who was to be his companion during the first appearance of the Legendary Lawman. Behind them was a huge reproduction of *Batman* comics, depicting a gigantic Batman and a diminutive Bat-Mite. The

poster even bore the inscription “12¢” for comic books had risen in price from a dime just a short time before.

It was an evening of musical gaiety and colorful highlights. For instead of two bands there were five. Instead of no floats at all, there were several. Providing the musical prologue for the Batman float was the Scarlet Knights of Rutland, an adult drum and bugle corps. Flags flew, drums thundered and trumpets snarled in colorful array before the 1961 parade faded into oblivion on the batwings of enchanted time.

Enthused at the public response, Cioffredi, this writer and Batman, immediately began making plans for the 1962 coming of Batman to Rutland. A letter written to National and carried in a subsequent issue of *Batman* gave the Rutland parade country-wide publicity.

News coverage by the Rutland Daily Herald awakened Vermont to the fact that Rutland had a drawing card on its hands as far as Halloween was concerned. Television personnel were on hand to record the 1962 procession of phantasmagoria.

It was a successful repeat performance for the Rutland Recreation Department. Again thousands of school age chiroptera, night jars and cauldron-tenders were on the march. Floats appeared in delightful profusion and bands this time were six in number, along with an adult precision marching group. This time the Batmobile cruised into view for the parade lineup. A powerful Olds Starfire black convertible had been properly fitted with a huge Bat-head grill design for the occasion.

Making his debut alongside the Rutland Batman was Robin the Boy Wonder, much to the delight of the on-lookers. Robin’s costume matched that of his comic book counterpart, adding even more color to the Batman parade section.

Halloween 1963 arrived. This time Batman had the aid of Night Legion, Rutland County Charter Chapter, Inc., one of the city’s more active social groups.

With the help of Harry M.D. Levins of Rutland, now serving as a lieutenant with the U.S. Army in Germany, a remarkable float back-



was prepared. Levin's artistic hand reproduced a mammoth Bat symbol as is seen in the title logo of *Batman* comics. The Bat-Mite, riding a Halloween broom, was sketched in as the poster's central figure. Heads of Batwoman and Robin were drawn to give the entire poster well-balanced proportions. The finished product truly appeared as if the work had been done by Bob Kane himself. Levins, with other Legionnaires, then fashioned bat cut-outs to line the sides of the float, again just barely finishing up the task before parade time.

More floats, more bands, more marchers and more on-lookers sums up the 1963 procession. The Batman float was particularly well-received for now with Batman and Robin, stood Batwoman and Bat-Mite.

It was after this that Cioffredi decided to make the Batman parade marshal. And so he was for 1964's "unreal world come to life."

The evening was just right for a parade. Skies were black, the temperature crisp but not cold and Rutland City awaited the parade's coming.

Night Legionnaires, again working right up to parade time, prepared the latest Batman float. The idea was taken from the Batman family portrait seen on the back cover of the last *Batman Annual* comic book. Two extremely large bat cut-outs were mounted high above the float base. Liberally sprinkled with silver, red and gold sparkle dust, the signs proclaimed "Batman Family." Smaller bat cut-outs again lined the sides of the float. A park bench was locked into place on the float and the base of the vehicle was in turn covered with "grass," similar to that used as theatrical properties.

Batwoman held Bat-Mite as she regally took the center spot of honor on the bench. Batman stood to one side and Robin to the other. Also taking her place in this family portrait was Bat-Girl, whom the crowds found to be a charming addition to the parade of personages.

Again bigger in size, the parade was accorded the cheers and handclaps of watchers. As the Batman float passed by at one point, a mother said to her small son, "Look, it's Batman. I used to read about him."

"Where?" asked the boy, and then catching sight of the caped figures, shouted out, "It really is Batman. It really is!"

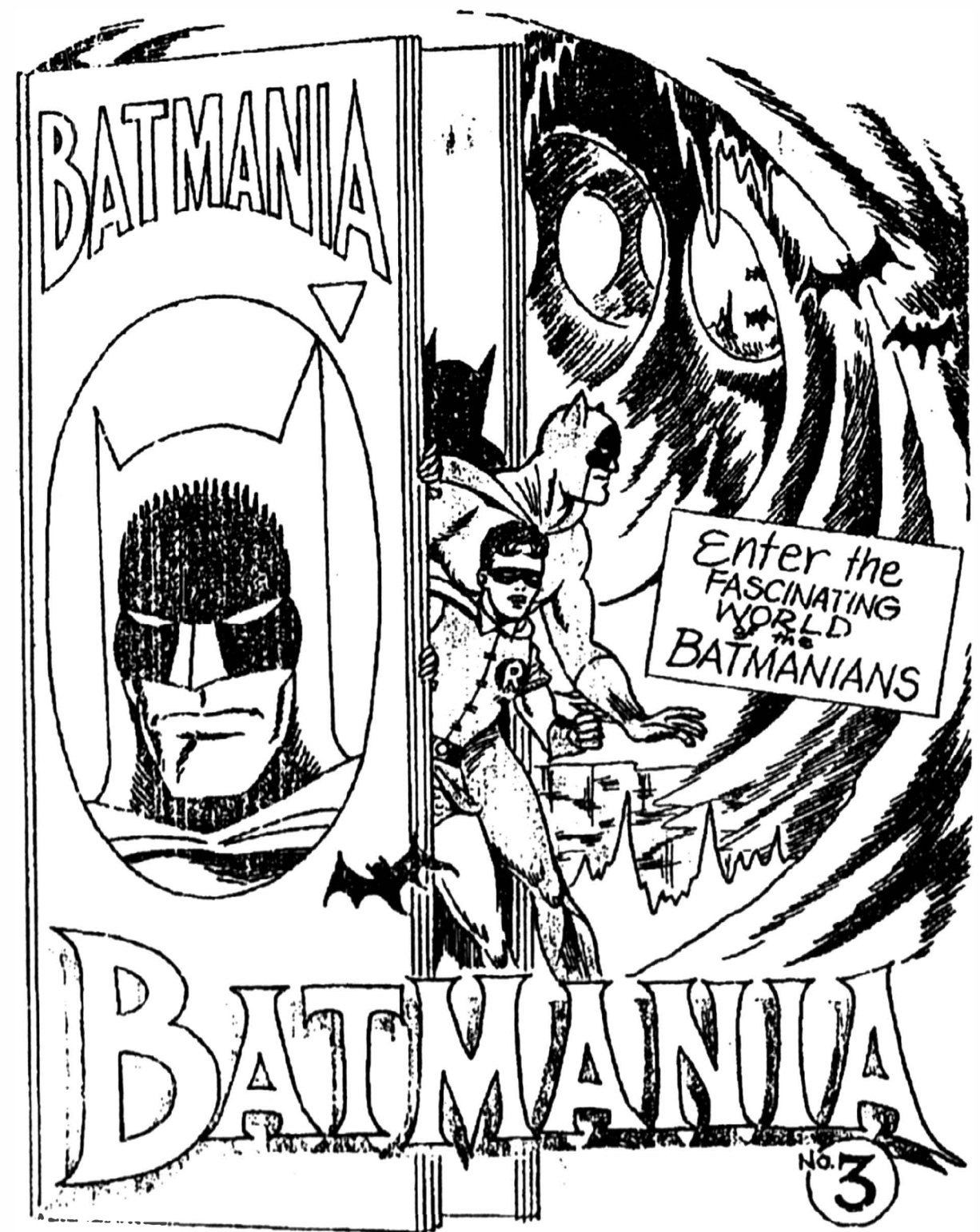
Interestingly enough Belfry The Bat, absent from the parades for three years, flitted back into the lineup again this year. As two pumpkins held hands in a cornfield, Belfry stood watching them providing Pad 73's float entry with the theme, THREE IS A CROWD.

What of the future?

Commissioner Gordon, who missed out on a 1964 appearance, almost is a certain bet to be present next year. The Joker has requested to get into the act.

Though heroes from rival publishing companies do not meet up with one another in each others' books, such may not be the case in Rutland. Captain America wants in. And if he can make the scene, the Rutland Recreation Department has already assured him, he'll be more than welcome.

Present plans also call for the awarding of a Batman Float Award Rotating Trophy. This will be given to the best float presentation, with the winners to keep the trophy in their possession for a year. The Batman group, it is



Art by Biljo White

already agreed upon mutually, will not be eligible in forthcoming contests since it is a well-established parade fixture.

All this goes to prove that Batman over his 25-years of comic book history has captured the fancy of both young and old alike. We in Rutland want to keep things that way and in our own manner work toward that goal each Halloween.

Excitement shining in young eyes and smiles of recognition on older faces continues to make the time and effort of having Batman in our parade well worth the effort.

When Halloween again descends on Rutland City, Batman will be there with the best of them.

Should you be in the vicinity pay us a visit, the invitation is always open. Better yet come and march with some of the most avid Batman fans in America today.

We'll be looking for you!

Tom Fagan  
Rutland, Vermont  
November 1964

*Editor's Note: As the years passed, the Rutland Halloween Parade grew. Comics fans from all around New England flocked to the small town for the event, and many were invited to the costumed parties held afterwards at Tom Fagan's "mansion." The Rutland parade—sometimes with cameo appearances by members of fandom—was depicted in comics stories published by both DC and Marvel in the early 1970s.*



# A very **ODD** cover gallery!

...presenting some of the best covers from the foremost humor fanzine of fandom's Golden Age: *Odd Magazine*, edited and published by Steve and Dave Herring. All cover art is by Dave.











# ODD

No. 9  
20¢

COME ONE,  
COME ALL AND  
SEE 4 OF THE MOST  
AMAZING FREAKS  
YOU'VE EVER  
SEEN!

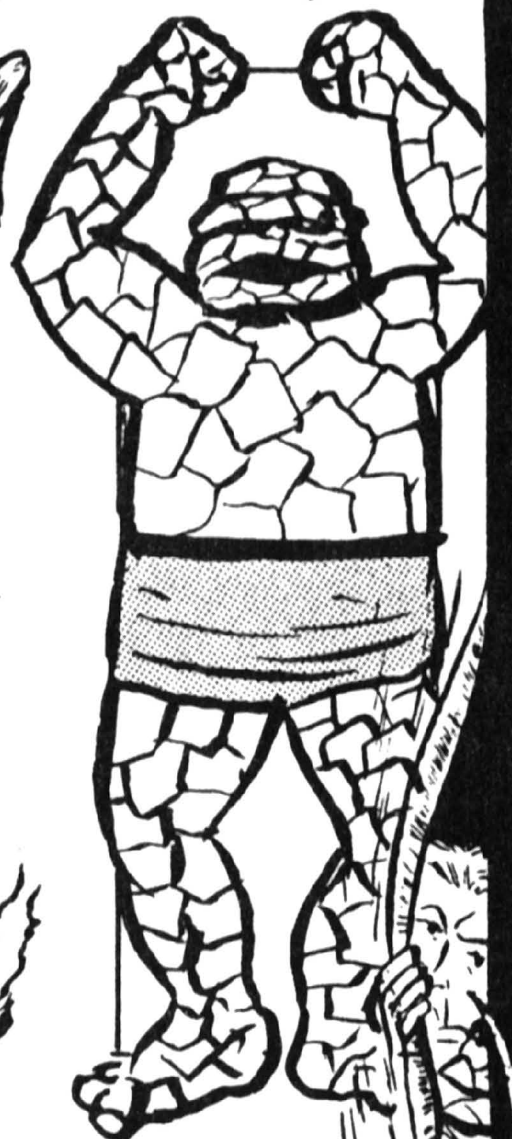
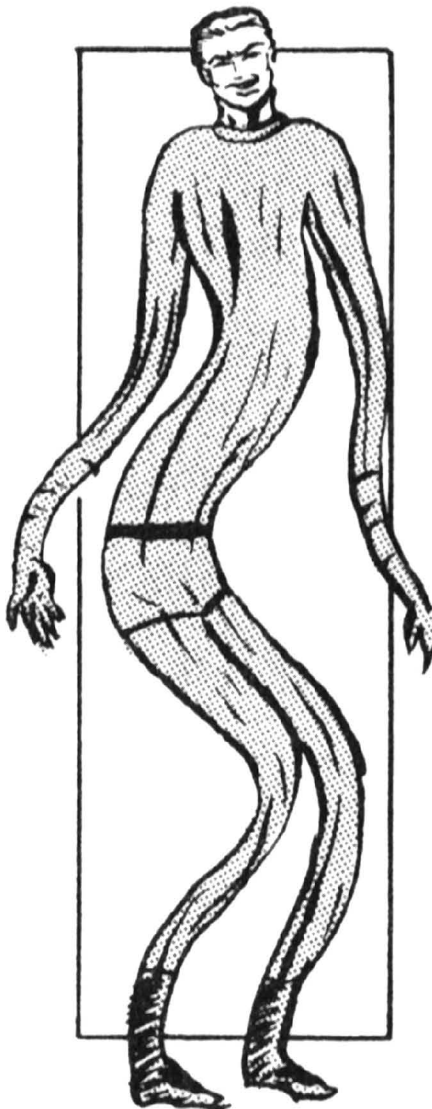
## 4 FANTASTIC FREAKS

SEE-THROUGH  
SALLY

MR.  
FEARSOME

THE HUMAN  
BON-FIRE

IT



A GIRL WHO  
CAN ACTUALLY  
TURN  
INVISIBLE

A MAN WHO  
CAN STRETCH  
HIS BODY IN  
ANY SHAPE

THIS ONE  
GOES ON FIRE  
AND LIVES!

A LIVING  
CREATURE  
MADE OF  
PIECES OF ROCK

I KNOW IT'S  
DEGRADING BEN, BUT  
ALL 4 OF US CAN'T LIVE  
ON THE MONEY WE  
GET FROM A 12¢ COMIC  
BOOK. WE HAVE TO  
MOONLIGHT!

DAVE HERRING



History has proven whenever liberty is smothered and men lie crushed beneath oppression, there always arises a man to defend the helpless, liberate the enslaved, and crush the tyrant. Such a man is BLACKHAWK!"

In 1939 the Germans pushed through Poland, only to be slowed at the gates of Warsaw by the small but valiant Polish Air Force. Captain von Tepp, Nazi air ace, led his infamous Butcher Squadron against the outnumbered Poles. The latter were shortly defeated and their last remaining planes shot down.

The skillful pilot of that final Polish fighter managed to land his machine near a farmhouse. As he ran for cover, von Tepp attempted to bomb him; however, the bomb hit the house instead, killing—by one of those amazing comic-book coincidences—the pilot's brother and sister, who lived there. The saddened aviator swore to avenge their deaths and walked away without a backward glance.

Soon a number of armed, dark-clad men calling themselves "Blackhawks" began popping up throughout Europe, always searching for von Tepp. At this time he was in a chateau somewhere in the north of France, preparing to execute an English nurse who had refused to reveal where certain medical supplies were hidden. Just before she was to be shot, the mysterious figure known only as "Blackhawk" entered the courtyard and ordered her would-be executioners to surrender. As Blackhawk's uniformed men materialized on the wall around the plaza, von Tepp tried to escape, but was tripped by the nurse.

Soon arriving at a secret island base somewhere in the Atlantic, Blackhawk explained to von Tepp that he was the Polish pilot who had escaped him and challenged the German ace to an aerial duel in an attempt to avenge the deaths of his brother and sister.

Secretly, von Tepp managed to loosen the gas valve on Blackhawk's craft. Just an insurance move, you understand. As the world's greatest pilot and a member of the master race to boot, he knew he couldn't lose, but why take a chance?



Proudly Presents ...

## THE FIRST GREAT DAYS OF BLACKHAWK



by  
**Derrill Rothermich**  
and  
**Roy Thomas**

Art by Biljo White

*Blackhawk and all related characters  
are trademarked & © by DC Comics.*



In the midst of the battle Blackhawk realized what von Tepp had done and unhesitatingly did a back flip, ramming his plane into that of the German. Both of them survived the resulting crash to earth in good health, though, and Blackhawk had to polish von Tepp off with a gun. The nameless nurse aided the wounded avenger but was soon sent back to England: "Ours is a mission of justice and death, while yours is one of mercy and healing."

Thus Blackhawk was first introduced in *Military Comics* #1, dated August 1941. The rest of the comic consisted of war stories, featuring such characters as the Death Patrol (an unproclaimed parody of the Blackhawks), Yankee Eagle, the Sniper, and others. Despite this wealth of heroes, however, Blackhawk was always cover-featured, as he proved the most popular of the lot by far.

In *Military* #2 the Blackhawks for the first time utilized the revamped Grumman Skyrockets which were several years later to be replaced by streamlined jets. They rescued a cowardly English pilot who was showing an extremely white feather in a dogfight over the English Channel and took him to their island, where he stayed until he later proved himself a hero by saving Blackhawk, getting himself gallantly killed in the process.

The item of greatest importance in this issue was the introduction of the individual members of Blackhawk's great fighting team. The first story had been anything but definite as to the exact number and origin of the Blackhawks.\*

During the search for von Tepp, the reader had never seen the faces of any member but Blackhawk himself, and knew only that one of them spoke with a heavy Cockney accent: "You 'eard the guv'nor, lads. 'Op to h'it, lively now!" When

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\*Elaboration in late-forties issues of Blackhawk depicted the leader as an *American* pilot rejected by the RAF and therefore forming his own little air force of similarly frustrated warriors; but this was merely a rabbit pulled from a convenient hat, as it would obviously be unpatriotic to have the leader be anything but an American, you know.



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they had rescued the English nurse, one panel had showed at least seven on the wall, with the implication that more might be lurking about somewhere.

However, when they were introduced in the second issue, there were only six: Andre, Stanislaus, Hendrick, Boris, Zeg, and Olaf. The Englishman was never heard from again.

Even these six didn't stay the same for long, however. Boris and Zeg were quickly and quietly dropped from the roster and Hendrick soon became the Hendrickson of today. Yet, as simple as these six names are to remember, the artist managed in the introductory panel to introduce Olaf as Hendrick and vice versa.

With this wide range of characters, many possibilities were open to the writer, but few of these were ever capitalized on. The author did, though, wisely avoid a problem that frequents many comics today. By using only a few Blackhawks each issue, he avoided overcrowding and confusing the stories. Although all the Blackhawks usually appeared in a story, only a few were actually featured.

It was the third issue, however, before the most interesting of this fabled group was introduced.

From out of nowhere the Blackhawks heard a plane overhead. Thinking the Germans had finally located their island, they manned their anti-aircraft guns. However, before any action was taken, parts of the plane above began raining from the sky, followed by the body of the plane itself.

Blackhawk rushed to the wreckage and held aloft a cursing Chop Chop, who insisted in such English as he knew that "Misse Ann" was in danger. Miss Ann, who turned out to be the very English nurse Blackhawk had saved in the initial story, operated a haven for crippled soldiers in Yugoslavia. Learning that 10,000 Nazi soldiers were on their way to destroy the haven, Chop Chop had fixed up an old plane and had flown for help. It has lasted just long enough.

Not eager to have the ridiculous little Oriental tagging along on the rescue mission, Olaf tricked Chops (as he was often called in early issues) into tying himself up, and the Blackhawks zoomed off into the wild blue yonder.

The Germans had conveniently camped in a valley just below a dam, so Blackhawk heroically managed to blow it up. His men thought that he had been killed in the explosion, but he showed up in time to help them massacre the German troops with glee. There was a bit of the sadist in the early Blackhawk.

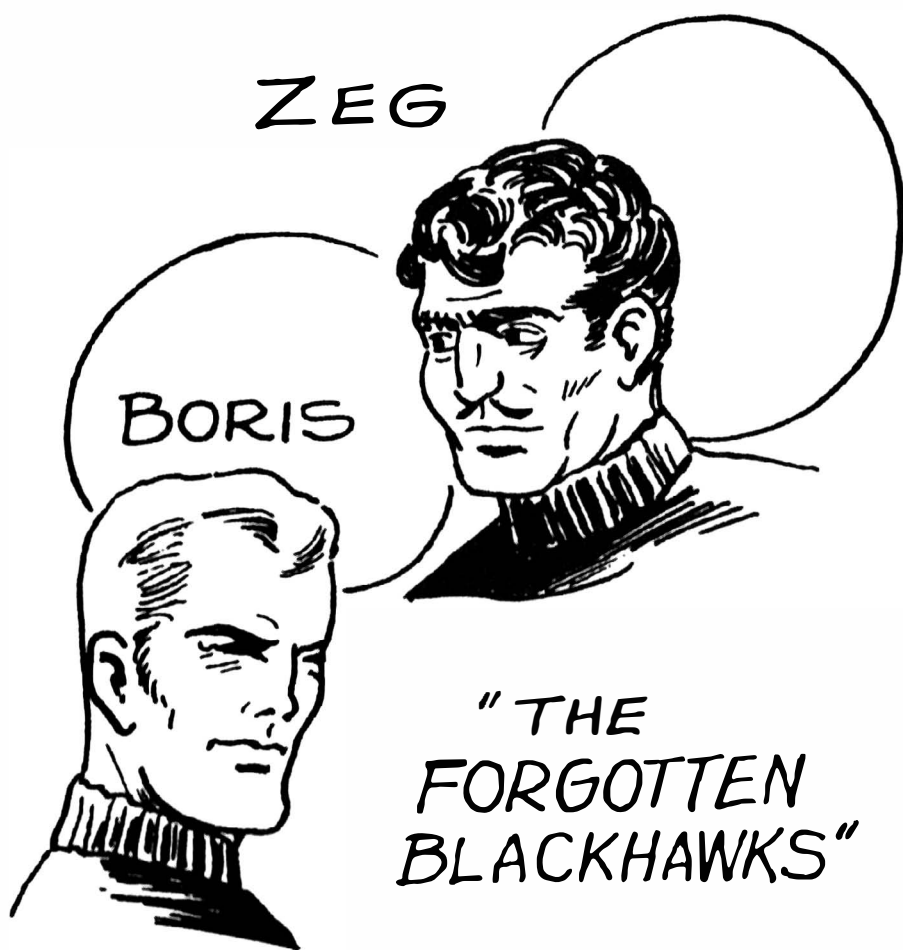
There was a sad note to this story, though. A German general, spotting Blackhawk on the cliff, fired at him, and the blue-clad leader was saved only because the courageous Andre took the bullets instead. Smile on his bon vivant French face, the "dying" Andre then cheerfully leaped off the cliff to start an avalanche which buried the remaining Nazis.

Meanwhile, back at the island, Chop Chop freed himself and found a sword. When the Blackhawks arrived, they found their minds abruptly taken off the horrors of war as Chops chased them into the night, swinging his weapon over his head. All in fun, of course.

The true origin of Chop Chop thus differs immeasurably from that printed in *Blackhawk* #203, just as Chops himself is quite different today from his early self. In deference to the Comics Code, he has been changed into a handsome Chinese copy of Blackhawk who was fighting for freedom and justice long before meeting the Blackhawks. This new "origin" undoubtedly pleased many of the younger readers, but we



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still miss the short, fat, and very funny Chinaman once featured in *Military*.

Chop Chop's entrance into the strip provided an element very much absent until then—humor. Although how he received his colorful name was never told, it was rather evident that his favorite weapon was a meat cleaver, which he handled with considerable skill. His never-to-be-forgotten war cry as he charged into battle was "Yippee! Me make hamburger!"

Chops also brought about a significant change in Blackhawk himself. In the first two issues Blackhawk's desire for revenge against the Germans was the major influence. As a result he was little more than an unsmiling machine of destruction, showing little emotion other than hatred. Chop Chop's infectious humor could not help but affect Blackhawk, who from this issue forward was not above an occasional pun himself.

As soon as his personality began to change for the better, Blackhawk found himself up to his chest-insignia in predatory females. Time and again a familiar plot pattern repeated itself: Blackhawk was captured by Nazis (Japs, other) and taken before a female leader (Black Tigress, Red Laura, other), who immediately proclaimed her love for him. He steadfastly refused, of course, and was then imprisoned (tortured, other). At the end of the story the villainess (occasionally after a rapid reformation) somehow managed to get herself killed in the fray as Blackhawk broke up her nefarious scheme. Sniffle.

Even when the girl wasn't an enemy agent, but One of Ours, she still often managed to lust after Blackhawk at first sight. In *Military* #6 Blackhawk stole a germ warfare formula from a lab in the Bavarian Alps. Rescued later from an avalanche by a girl who happened to be skiing nearby at the time, he discovered (surprisingly?) that she was Elsa Hammel, daughter of the inventor of the formula.

Later, her father killed by the Gestapo agents who had forced him to work for the Nazis, she joined Blackhawk in an attempt to escape on skis, but she and the Fearless Flier were trapped by a ground patrol and planes. The other Blackhawks quickly arrived to save their leader, but Elsa got shot anyway.

As she lay dying, she gasped out to her newfound idol, "Please...go. And never...stop...fighting for freedom. You must go...oooh..." Sniffle again.

Like Smilin' Stan Lee today, however, the writer seldom let a tale end on such a gloomy note. Later, when the boys

returned to their island, Chop Chop mistook them for Germans and tried to machine-gun their planes. He was too small to control the gun, though, and went bouncing around the field, shouting, "Gen'l Sherman right! War is &\*%\$#!"

The Nazis and Japanese weren't the only menace fought by the Blackhawk, however. For example, what do you think would cause the belligerent nations to cease hostilities in the middle of a world war? An invasion from space? The sudden appearance of a giant monster?

Wrong both times. In the seventh issue of *Military Comics*, Genghis Khan returned to life and again tried to conquer the world. He turned out to be merely a phony wearing a bulletproof vest, though, and his own men eventually finished him off.

*Military* #9 provided a great surprise for Blackhawk as well as for the readers. On a dark stormy night—and amid artwork reminding one of the fabulous Will Eisner—the Blackhawks returned to the mountain scene of Andre's death in remembrance of his sacrifice. However, the heavy rain soon forced them to take shelter in a nearby castle. It seemed empty enough at first; then suddenly a man in an iron mask appeared from a hidden door to warn Blackhawk that the castle was being used as Nazi Regional Headquarters before he disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived.

Ere long, the Iron Mask had occasion to rescue the oft-captured Blackhawk (and Olaf as well this time) from a German firing squad. It was soon revealed that the man behind the metal disguise was none other than the late Andre, reports of whose death had been somewhat premature. Though he had survived both the supposedly mortal shot and the avalanche, his face had been so scarred that he had decided to wear a mask forever.

Determined to return his friend to his former self, Blackhawk at once flew to a concentration camp in Germany and rescued one Dr. Fritz von Rath, the world's greatest plastic surgeon. However, the horrors of the concentration camp had affected the doctor's mind and had driven him, for all practical purposes, insane.

Despite his madness, Dr. von Rath attempted to restore Andre's appearance in the next issue. But when the bandages were removed, the face was not that of the old Andre. Dr. von Rath could remember only the face of the evil Baron von Ziefh, who had forced the doctor's daughter to marry him and who had thrown him into the concentration camp. In his madness von Rath had made Andre over into the image of the baron.

To make an 11-page story shorter, Andrew ended up not only restored to youthful handsomeness but also engaged to



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In addition to good stories, the one thing most apparent about these early Blackhawk tales is the fine artwork—by Reed Crandall later, but initially by Charles Cuidera, who is again drawing the strip today. He is perhaps one of the best artists in the comics field, but it must be admitted that his present work is not quite up to the high-quality art evinced in Blackhawk's fledgling adventures.

One probable influence on his style in the early issues of *Military* was the editorship of the aforementioned Will Eisner, whose famed "Spirit" strip stands as one of the epitomes of the masked hero. As was the case in the Spirit stories, each Blackhawk tale boasted a different, creative title logo. The use of heavy shading and detail, plus the fact that much of the action often took place in the shadows, also lent an atmosphere reminiscent of Eisner—as well as of Bob Kane's excellent work in pioneer Batman tales.

Cuidera gave up the illustrating chores after the eleventh issue, and the strip was then brought to its all-time height by Reed Crandall, whose name is more closely associated with that of Blackhawk than of any other comics character. Cuidera later returned to the strip, but the flair displayed in his first year as Blackhawk artist was lacking.

When the war ended and many costumed characters slowly but surely began to vanish from the newsstands, one might have expected the war-born Blackhawk to have been among the first. But this was far from the case. Not only did Blackhawk do well in his own magazine, but he even continued in *Modern Comics* (the post-war title of *Military*) for a time, until that comic ceased publication.

In the late 40's and early 50's he fought primarily against fictitious dictators from mythical countries, but later—and especially after the Quality Comics Group folded and DC began publishing Blackhawk—he became increasingly enmeshed in science-fiction tales of less appeal to his older readers.

As long-time Blackhawk fans, we therefore eagerly awaited the recently promised changes in the comic. Having watched the slow disintegration of Blackhawk from one of the best magazines on the market to an extremely mediocre one featuring the traditional DC monsters and spacemen, we thought that any change must necessarily be for the better. And it was.

But, though quality of stories and art has improved somewhat, National has lessened these benefits by giving the Blackhawks new uniforms which make them look more like fashion models than a semi-military group. As a result, the first days of Blackhawk continue to be the greatest in his long career....

Perhaps, when all is said and done, it is these faults more than anything else which prove the intrinsic worth of Blackhawk as a comics character. Through the bleak days after World War II, when comics were entering a decade-long decline, Blackhawk continued as a going concern while Sub-Mariner was living and dying a second time and while Green Lantern was sitting in Limboland polishing his trusty but increasingly rusty ring. Blackhawk has survived declining artwork, inferior stories, the stodginess of the Comics Code, and a more-than-healthy dose of what has been called "Creeping Monsterism."

Perhaps he can survive his current "new look" as well.

TM & © by DC Comics.



von Rath's daughter, who had turned up like a good penny. The romance evidently went downhill, however; Andre is still with the Blackhawks.

Telescoped like this, it may sound as if the early Blackhawk stories were, to use the current but imprecise teenage vernacular, corny. But there was a lot of good, solid action in these early stories, which continued until relatively recent times.

In *Military* #13, for example, von Tepp's brother (his friends called him "The Butcher") tried to avenge himself on the avenger.

In #17 a secret-identity female named Golden Bell (Japanese this time for variety's sake) got the usual bullet treatment. Shot in the climax, she nevertheless managed to aid our hero by staggering several blocks, climbing a fire escape to a roof, and lighting a lamp to mark a meeting hall for bombing. Clever, these Japanese.

In #19 the first King Cobra appeared, aided by a group called the Rattlesnakes in imitation of the Blackhawks. They were a particularly vicious lot.

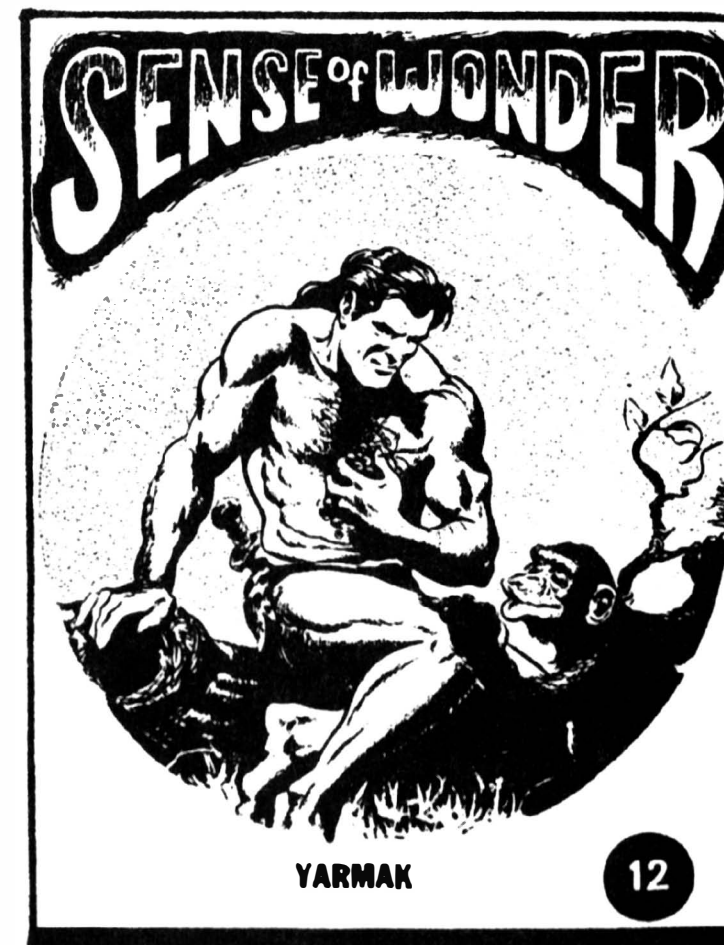
These stories, of course, show that the writer was imitating some of his earlier great successes. They even used the sympathy angle again. This time it was Stanislaus, and he was only growing blind instead of dying in an avalanche. After a supposed death in *Military* #31, he turned up the very next issue and was able to muddle on to victory when given the eyes of a recently deceased dog.

The ancestor of today's Lady Blackhawk appeared then, too; in #20 a stuntgirl nicknamed Sugar (because she was so hard to get—a common war joke) helped Blackhawk escape his daily quota of Nazi captors and vowed to return. She never did, though, unless you believe in reincarnation.

Perhaps the most unusual pair of adventure-hero stories ever published in a comic book appeared in #12 and #29. They concerned a mysterious briefcase and its terrible secret (Xanukhara, they all called it before they died). They must be read to be appreciated, however.

-end-





Summer 1972

## 2 – The Best of *Sense of Wonder*

When I was writing *Sense of Wonder: A Life in Comic Fandom* (released by TwoMorrows Publishing in November 2001), I thought, “Wouldn’t it be great to reprint some of the actual features that appeared in the original *Sense of Wonder* fanzine back in fandom’s Golden Age?”

I had, after all, tried to produce the best possible fan magazine, given the limitations of my time, talent, energy and funds. Though *Sense of Wonder* began humbly in spirit-duplicated form when I was sophomore in high school, it had graduated to offset printing by the time I was a college freshman. The contents, too, had “graduated” in their own way, offering a higher caliber of articles and art.

But a memoir like the book for TwoMorrows wasn’t the place to include actual reprints. If I wanted to do that, I would need to publish a “companion” to *A Life In Comic Fandom*. Thus was born the concept that gradually broadened into the *Comic Fandom Reader*, a collection of the best text features not just from my mag, but from a bevy of the best zines from the dawning of comicdom.

Then came the question: “What really *did* comprise “the best” of *Sense of Wonder*? I hadn’t gone back to re-read the twelve issues in some time. Though I knew I would be focusing mainly on the later issues, especially for artwork (because the old ditto work could not be acceptably reproduced), I spent a languorous weekend re-acquainting myself with my old labors of love. Finally, I settled on the following features:

### **A Rather Personalized Report On the International Convention of Comic Art** *Sense of Wonder* #5

Dave Bibby, who wrote this report, was a very active writer in the early days of fandom, especially in terms of writing intelligent letters of comment in response to most of the fanzines he received. He and I became pen pals, and I was delighted to present this concise account of the first comicon that was supposed to be truly international. (As it turned out, organizer Phil Seuling felt that he had been “sold a bill of goods” by Maurice Horn, who had promised a European contingent would attend the New York convention...in exchange for his own plane ticket being paid for by Seuling. Horn was, I believe, the only one from the continent to show up.)

Bibby’s report is accompanied, here, by photographs taken by John Benson and Stan Goldenberg. (The ones that aren’t credited are Stan’s, reprinted from *Gosh Wow!* #3, in 1968).

### **Famous Con Artists** *Sense of Wonder* #5

All comics fans will remember the ads for the Famous Artists School that appeared in comic books, sometimes featuring Albert Dorne, and in later years, Norman Rockwell. This was my humorous “take” on those ads, along the same lines as other parodies that Marshall Lanz and I had done for the *Irving Forbush Gazette*. I wanted to follow it up with one based on the

Charles Atlas body-building ads, but never got around to it.

### **“Heisenberg Alley”** *Sense of Wonder* #5

Thomas Fisher, who later would co-write a ground-breaking article on Will Eisner’s career, penned the script to this very Eisner-esque tale in mid-1967. Unfortunately, after doing my level best on the artwork, the final result was marred by unusually poor ditto printing. Therefore, as a tribute to the late Mr. Fisher, I recruited the very talented Mike Worley (and his inker buddy Rob Davis) to re-draw the strip from my lay-outs especially for this book. The result is, I’m sure you will agree, outstanding—and I can finally rest easy, knowing that Tom’s script has been beautifully served.

### **“The Ogre”** **The Immortal Corpse** *Sense of Wonder* #6

The Immortal Corpse remains the most popular character of all the amateur creations that I invented in fandom’s first decade, but not because of my own efforts; it was the writing acumen of Dick Trageser who put the character over.

Altogether, Dick wrote six pulp-inspired Corpse yarns, three of which appeared in *Sense of Wonder*. One of my favorites was the last one that we co-wrote, published as “All That Is Ugly” but is here returned to its original, straight-forward title. The Ogre was intended as a recurring nemesis for the Envoy of Death.





Illo by Bill Black

Big Barda is TM & © by DC Comics.

### **Breakdowns** *Sense of Wonder #11*

Like other fanzines, I decided to inaugurate a column where certain fans would be invited to comment on a particular topic. It was a way of eliciting more pointed commentary from readers, many who were too busy to write full-length articles. It was great to have a little something by folks like Jan S. Strnad, Fred Patten, Gordon Matthews and Rick Norwood in the zine.

I chose to reprint this installment because I think it's interesting how many of the "directions" fans wanted for the graphic story medium have actually been taken: the graphic "album" especially.

### **Eisner: A Man and His Work** *Sense of Wonder #11*

From the moment I read *The Spirit* reprint comics from Harvey in late 1966-early 1967, and the commentary about them that came in *Fantasy Illustrated* right afterwards, Will Eisner became one of my favorite graphic story artists. No one exemplified the ideal of the writer-artist more than the creator of *The Spirit* newspaper section. But as I began looking into his career, it became apparent to me that his contributions to the Golden Age of Comics were even more wide-ranging than I'd originally thought.

It was a serendipitous letter from me to Raymond Miller, suggesting an article surveying Eisner's entire career, which brought a reply to the effect that he and Tom Fisher were already working on one! The result was what I believe was the first attempt to chronicle "the man and his work." While the piece has its share of errors, and has been superseded since its appearance in the spring of 1972, I felt it had sufficient historical importance to warrant its inclusion. It's nicely written, and deftly incorporates information gleaned from interviews the writers did with Bob Powell and others.

### **E.C. Horror Library Review** *Sense of Wonder #11*

It's hard to believe there was a time when E.C.'s great comics had not yet been widely reprinted. This book was a godsend, coming when the comic books themselves had escalated rapidly in price.

### **Yarmak the Fearless One** *Sense of Wonder #12*

By the early 1970s, some fans were beginning to look beyond U.S. publishers, to discover worthwhile and interesting comics from around the world. *Alter Ego* printed two parts of Fred Patten's "Supermen South," a look at Mexican comics. Asterix and other European strips were being

introduced in Mike Barrier's *Funnyworld* and elsewhere. It was appropriate, then, that *Sense of Wonder* offer something along those lines—in our case, a look at the "Aussie Tarzan," Yarmak. And who better to write it than an associate of his creators (the Pitt brothers): John T. Ryan of Queensland, Australia. The Fearless One became the cover subject of *Sense of Wonder* #12, in an outstanding piece created by fan favorite Don Newton.

### **Stan Pitt & Gully Foyle** *Sense of Wonder #12*

This article, which was run more or less as an "addendum" to the Yarmak study, was unique in that it gave us the ultimate "insider" look at the difficulties faced in syndicating a Sunday-only comic strip in the U.S. in the late 1960s. Ryan wrote two or three articles on "Gully Foyle," but as far as I know, this was the only one that revealed the details of the strip's ultimate failure to reach a newspaper audience. John's account is accompanied by a couple of the most spectacular Sundays, as well as a piece of promotional art. (I sure wish I owned one of those nifty booklets with *all* the completed pages!)

A number of other features in *Sense of Wonder* could have just as easily been included. Bob Cosgrove's "Jack Kirby, Modern Mythologist" was an excellent study of the King's Fourth World series at DC Comics. It was accompanied by an illustration of Big Barda which certainly underlined one reason for her nickname.

Alan Hanley was a favorite of mine, probably because his art was reminiscent of that of the great C. C. Beck, chief artist for the original *Captain Marvel* of the 1940s. Hanley was perhaps best known for his thinly veiled knock-off of the Big Red Cheese called Goodguy (or, alternatively, Major Marvel). For *Sense of Wonder*, Hanley came up with a big-foot style strip called "Captain America Bunny" that offered some of his most clever writing and facile artwork.

Another feature I could easily have included was John T. Ryan's lengthy "answer" to Fisher and Miller's "Eisner: A Man and His Work," called "Eisner & Co.," which appeared in *Sense of Wonder* #12. Ryan's piece corrected and substantially expanded



on the earlier article. But, since exhaustive research has been done on Mr. Eisner's illustrious career in the past thirty years, I felt that those who wanted the best information on him would look elsewhere anyway. Besides, I had two other items by John Ryan to run—the already-discussed “Yarmak” and “Gully Foyle” contributions...so Australia's number one fan would be well-represented herein.

After talking in some detail about the genesis of my “Assembled Man” four-part comic strip in *A Life in Comic Fandom*, I would have liked to have reprinted it here. Unfortunately, the strip ran almost sixty pages, and the long middle chapter was printed by ditto. Therefore, the adventures of my patchwork man will remain undisturbed in Limbo Land.

I was lucky to be able to publish the “Defenders” episode of Steve Ditko's Mr. A in my 11<sup>th</sup> issue, but this is something that has been reprinted elsewhere, probably several times.

As far as artwork is concerned, I'm taking the opportunity of accompanying these annotations with various illustrations (by a succession of talented folks) that appeared in the letter columns, editorials, and other articles that did not make it into this book. I feel it incumbent to point out that several of them came to me through intermediaries. I did not, for example, have the good fortune of corresponding with Frank Frazetta or Al McWilliams. However, I discovered that when one is publishing a fairly well-regarded zine, gems can pop “out of the woodwork” and who was I to turn them away? It was really a kick to print Frazetta's “Sweet Adelaine” syndicate try-out episode in my pages.

Still, one of the chief pleasures of fanzine publishing was interacting with others in fandom. So many of them were not only genuinely talented, but were just plain interesting people. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, it was my pleasure to correspond at some length with some of the



contributors to *Sense of Wonder*. Larry Herndon ... Ronn Foss ... Dave Bibby ... Tom McKiniry ... John McGeehan ... Sherman Howard ... Mike Raub (who printed #3) ... Steve Johnson—all were pen pals for extended periods of time. I learned so much from each one of them. Not only about the ins and outs of amateur publishing, but about the

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history of comics, the wonderful world of science fiction and sword and sorcery fiction, as well as the realms of their personal lives. They readily shared their life experiences with me, and I with them. We were that peculiar breed known as “fannish friends.” Today, I suppose, much the same thing is available via the Internet. But somehow, the “you’ve got mail” of AOL lacks the same thrill of opening one’s mailbox and finding a letter from a good correspondent with the heft that promised several pages of juicy prose.

Over its five year life span, *Sense of Wonder* went through a gradual metamorphosis.

At its inception, I modeled it after the early ditto issues of *Star-Studded Comics*, with strips and text stories featuring a series of amateur heroes. While there were comic strips drawn by Jim Shooter, Mickey Schwaberow and the ubiquitous Mr. Foss, I drew most of them myself, with variable results. Only in retrospect have I realized that *none of them were traditional super hero strips*. I had become an acolyte of Will Eisner, and I’m sure he inspired me to try to create comics of a slightly more realistic ilk. Certainly Twylite in the first issue was nothing more than a Spirit knock-off. In the sixth issue, I wrote and drew a six-page parable very much in the style of the Spirit sections of the late 1940s called “The Super Hero.” Specifically, it was my tribute to “The Story of Gerhard Shnobble”—the man who could fly. (No laughter, please.) And of course there was “Heisenberg Alley.”

The Eisner influence was also readily apparent in the next phase of the fanzine: the brief period in 1969 and 1970

when, for two issues, it was known as *Incognito*. The name change was due to nothing more than embarrassment that I was bringing the fanzine back so soon after grandly announcing its tragic demise, a mere six months earlier. I had refunded all subscription monies, returned all pending contributions, and moaned publicly about the insupportable financial burden the mag had become. But when I had an inspiration for an ambitious new strip, just as I was beginning four years at the University of Idaho, I needed a vehicle. And so I resurrected an old fanzine title I had used in 1965-1966, and the “Assembled Man” appeared under its banner. #8 and #9 could probably also have been simply titled after the featured strip which made up ninety percent of each issue.

The third stage of *Sense of Wonder* began with the return to its original title with #10. In a brief manifesto, I wrote, “We firmly believe that the graphic story medium is an art form as legitimate as painting, literature or any other art form you’d care to mention. We believe that a substantial amount of truly inspired work has been done since the inception of the comic strip, and that much more will be done in the future as the serious study of the medium continues. We believe that the potential of the medium has largely not been realized because of commercial considerations in professional panel art magazines. And we believe that amateur magazines provide the ideal place to experiment with and analyze the graphic story, where monetary gain is not and should never be the main reason for publication. These convictions form the foundation for *Sense of Wonder*. If you share them, perhaps you will enjoy our efforts to explore the vast and exciting world of the comic strip. Welcome.”

Okay—it was pretentious, but my heart was in the right place. By this time, my admiration for Eisner had diversified to an appreciation for the work of such great talents as Harvey Kurtzman (especially his war comics at EC), Alex Toth (who gave a long, fascinating interview to *Graphic Story Magazine* which really opened my eyes), Bernard Krigstein (“Master Race”) and more.

What I quickly realized, however, was that there was no way I was equipped to produce work at the cutting edge of comics, and most members of fandom weren’t either; instead, *Sense of Wonder* would be best-suited as a forum for the appreciation, discussion, and historical investigation of the best that professional comic books had to offer. *That* became the real theme of the last two issues, which tilted toward articles, rather than amateur strips—especially the final, and undoubtedly the best, issue. I had finally found the format that I was best suited to follow.

And then it was over.

Why was the fanzine discontinued just when it had found itself?

For that story, you will have to turn to *Sense of Wonder: A Life in Comic Fandom* from TwoMorrows Publishing. The situation was complex, involving as it did my graduation from college, a disastrous fire, and the inevitable need to find my way in the Real World.

It’s worth noting that, on the inside front cover of *Sense of Wonder* #12, I printed the slogan “Reality is Slavery!” And so it is, in a way.

If it weren’t for fandom then, and fandom now—and the creative pursuits they make possible—I think too much of this life would seem like toiling on a plantation.

-end-



# A RATHER PERSONALIZED REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF COMIC ART

(THE 1968 S.C.A.R.P. CON IN NEW YORK CITY)

by Dave Bibby

The International Convention of Comic Art was held on July 4 - 7, 1968, at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in New York City under the auspices of SCARP (The Society for Comic Art Research and Preservation). The following is one fan's view of the proceedings.

Independence Day this year meant more to me than the usual fireworks displays and patriotic celebration, for this was the day that the New York Comicon was to be held. Upon arriving at the Statler-Hilton Hotel on 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, I was quite surprised to find that the comic convention was occupying the better part of the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. Upon entering the convention area, I could see why so great a space was required. After signing the roll, my mind was attacked by a visual bombardment of comic art. There were at least a dozen original drawings of comic book heroes and villains drawn by Gray Morrow, all beautiful. Nearby the handiwork of Jim Steranko was present, with drawings of characters he had conceived but have yet to appear in any media. One large room was devoted to exhibits of comic strip art, with artists like Hal Foster, Milton Caniff, Al Capp, Mort Walker, Leonard Starr, and many others represented, along with comic books under glass display cases. Noticing a rather befuddled-looking police guard walking about, I approached him and said, "I guess this all seems a bit strange to you."

He replied, "Hell no. I used to read comics too. When I think of all the comic books I've thrown away that probably ...." A familiar lament.

Of course there was a room for comic book dealers, and it was soon apparent that there were

more valuable items on display in here than there was in the display cases. One only had to look quickly to spot dozens of rare titles: *All-Star*, *Red Raven*, *Captain America*, *Marvel Mystery*, *Detective*, *Green Lantern*, and countless more, all selling at prices capable of destroying one's sense of wonder. Like many other fans, I tried to forget the exact amount of money I parted with over the four convention days. Another room was provided for fans to sell and trade the items they had brought with them, and the "action" was often as



*Keynote speaker Stan Lee is given a plaque by con chairman Phil Seuling.*

spirited here as in the dealers' room (although the large number of dealers present, plus the high prices, caused several dealers to wonder whether it was all worth it).

The first official program of the con took place in the mid-afternoon of the first day, as SCARP President Phil Seuling introduced Stan Lee to a very enthusiastic audience. The subject of Mr. Lee's talk was "Comics: Not What They Were, Not What They Will Be," but this was soon lost in the midst of Mr. Lee's easy-going presentation and the wild-eyed fans dying to ask questions. As was to be the rule throughout all the presentations at the con, the question-and-answer period took up more time than the speaker's talk, and usually was more interesting (and fun besides).

It would be impossible for me to recall all of the many interesting points Stan Lee (as well as the other speakers) gave out. It would be doubly impossible for me to write about all of them without devoting a whole zine to this report. Therefore, I'll only mention what I considered highlights of each person's talk.

*Photos by  
Stan Goldenberg  
and  
John Benson*





Top: Panel discussion "The Editor's Job" with (left to right) Wally Wood, Gil Kane, Roy Thomas, Dick Giordano, Dick Sherry (shown only at top), Joe Orlando and Stan Lee.

With Stan Lee, what I considered the most interesting bit of information came about when a fan asked him why Steve Ditko left Marvel. Lee answered that he didn't know and that there was no great feud between them. Lee said that he always liked Ditko, but in story consultations over the years working on Spider-Man and other characters, Lee began to get the distinct impression that Ditko wasn't too fond of him. According to Stan, one day Steve Ditko just got up and said, "I'm leaving," and that was that.

Late in the afternoon of July 4<sup>th</sup>, the first of several panel discussions was held. The theme of the panel was "The Editor's Job," and sitting on the panel were Dick Giordano (who was present at the con all four days), Gil Kane (who likewise was present most of the time), Joe Orlando, Wally Wood, Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, and Richard Sherry, an editor with one of the large comic strip syndicates. The discussion was quite interesting and the fans had plenty of questions. One fan asked Gil Kane if he was responsible for the "Lee

Marvin" cover on *His Name Is ... Savage* #1 and Mr. Kane replied, "Yes," which was the shortest answer given by anyone in the four days! A very interesting remark was made by Roy Thomas when yours truly asked him if *Alter Ego* was ever coming out. He replied in the affirmative, saying that the ish is being printed and should be ready in a month or two. That's about August or September, gang, so get ready!

Early in the evening was the presentation of the Alley Awards, which didn't go over very well due to the lack of winning pros being present. This ended the formal program of July 4<sup>th</sup>, although comic dealers went on for several hours more.

July 5<sup>th</sup> saw more spirited comic dealing and more enthusiasm on the part of the fans than on the day previous (if that was at all possible). The first item on the program was at 12:00 noon. Craig Flessel, artist on the "David Crane" strip, talked to us about the early days of comic books, as Mr. Flessel was working at DC at the time of the introduction of Superman and Batman, and retired from the comic books in 1940 to go on to advertising art and eventually "David Crane." Mr. Flessel brought along color proofs of old DC covers, such as issues of early Action comics that didn't feature Superman on the cover. Mr. Flessel spoke of the people he worked with at National such as Vin Sullivan, the "father of the comic book." Mr. Flessel also answered questions, mostly about old artists and where they are today. He didn't know of the location of Joe Shuster, co-creator of Superman, but mentioned that Shuster wore very thick glasses and no one believed he could draw under such a handicap when he first arrived at DC. Mr. Flessel described Jerry Siegel as bearing a very great resemblance to Clark Kent. All in all, a very interesting talk.

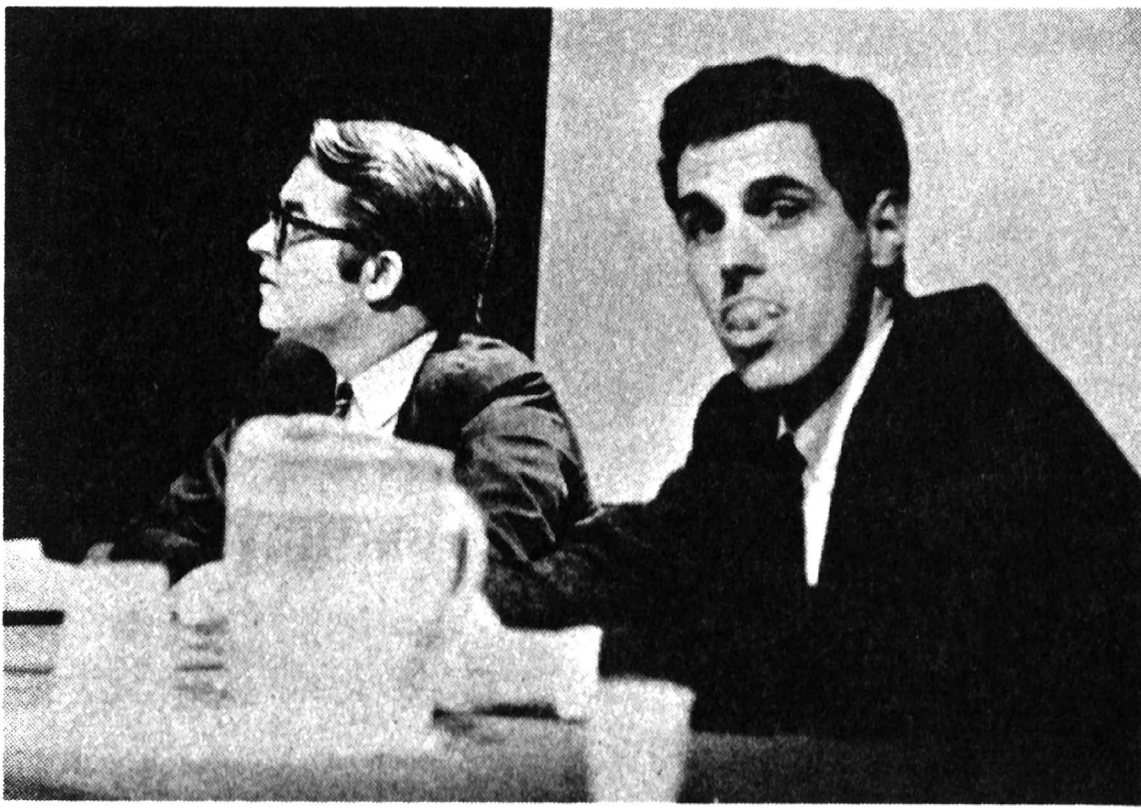
Around 1:30 in the afternoon, a small panel discussion was held which I found to be the most enjoyable and interesting event of the con. The members of the panel were Archie Goodwin and Al Williamson who were supposed to speak on "Collaboration: Its Usefulness and Its Faults." However, Mr. Williamson was admittedly nervous and covered up his tension by joking with Mr. Goodwin and any fan who asked a question. Mr. Williamson turned out to be as great a crowd-pleaser as Stan Lee, and it was obvious that he scored very heavily with all of the fans there. Both he and Mr. Goodwin came out with many interesting pieces of information. The fans were told that Wally Wood had



Carmine Infantino proudly displays his 1967 Alley Award in the offices of DC Comics. That's Joe Orlando on the right. Photo is by Mark Hanerfeld, who had just presented the award to Carmine.



written the story of Clawfang that appeared in a Harvey giant comic last year, and that Al drew the story in 1965. Unfortunately, Mr. Williamson said the strip would probably



Archie Goodwin and Al Williamson

not re-appear. With regards to collaboration, the two gentlemen explained that most of the story "conferences" between them when plotting "Secret Agent Corrigan" take place over the telephone, although Al tried to tell us first that Archie swiped plots from old Alex Raymond Flash Gordon adventures and second that Archie merely wrote his stories to fit the art swipes he had. Like I said, Al's joking made him a fan favorite. Other than that, Mr. Williamson had nothing but the highest praise for those he had collaborated with in the past, particularly Frank Frazetta and Roy Krenkel. He said he regarded the former as one of the greatest artists around and that he had learned a great deal from both men. Mr. Goodwin said he is *not* receiving any royalties from the *Creepy* and *Eerie* stories that Warren is now reprinting. I imagine I could write an article on just this discussion alone, but it is time to move on to other things.

Around five in the afternoon, the fans were treated to a selection of movies. Although the original films that were to be shown could not be obtained, two very worthy substitutes were aired. A feature version of the 1941 Captain Marvel serial was shown which everyone seemed to enjoy. The film induced spirited cheers every time Tom Tyler appeared as the great captain, and boos and hisses for the dastardly Scorpion. After Marvel, another feature version of a serial was shown, this time the 1943 Spy Smasher opus, which many fans (including yours truly) had seen on TV. This too was a good film with lots of fistfights and wild stunt work. In all, the film session lasted almost three hours.

Around eight p.m., Dr. Sol Davidson gave a talk on the "Anatomy of the Comics." Dr. Davidson is quite an interesting gentleman, as he received his PhD on the basis of a thesis he wrote on comic strips and books. With the tremendous amount of research he had to do, very few people are as well versed in the traditions of the comic strip as Dr. Davidson. His talk was most enlightening and interesting and brought a fitting close to the formal program of July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Saturday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, saw another day of spirited activity. The first presentation began at eleven a.m. with a talk by Lee Falk, the creator of Mandrake, the Magician and The Phantom. Mr. Falk spoke on "The Adventure Strip" and his long involvement with it. He told two very interesting stories involving his strips. His first involved World War II and the

occupation of Norway. During the Nazi occupation of Norway, the newspapers and radio stations were tightly controlled and were little more than propaganda devices. These media regularly told of the Third Reich's triumphs, such as the destruction of New York, Washington, etc. However, the newspapers from the outside world were smuggled into Norway, and the foreign papers often carried The Phantom. The people of Norway knew the U.S. must be safe or how else could comic strips still be produced there? In fact, Mr. Falk informed us that the Norwegian "underground" resistance movement used "Phantom" as its code name, a tribute to the masked hero of the jungle.

The second story involved the great Alex Raymond. It seems one segment of Mandrake involved a scene with wild horses with flailing hooves. The Mandrake artist found a Flash Gordon segment with a similar scene of wild horses, so the artist swiped it. Some months later, Mr. Falk visited Raymond's home and on his drawing board found the Mandrake sequence that Raymond thought was realistic enough to swipe! Mr. Falk assured us he told Raymond of the origin of the Mandrake panel and said Raymond was sufficiently surprised! Mr. Falk's talk was both informative and enjoyable.

At one o'clock that afternoon, a luncheon was held with two distinguished Guests of Honor: Will Eisner and Burne Hogarth. Both gentlemen received plaques from SCARP for their past achievements in the field of comic art. Mr. Hogarth's speech of appreciation soon turned into a rousing speech for all those present to increase the level of comic art from what it is regarded to what it can and *should* be. If there was anyone in the room who felt apathetic towards comic art when he entered, it seems doubtful that he left feeling the same after Mr. Hogarth's great speech. Of course, a



Lee Falk



Will Eisner

Burne Hogarth and Maurice Horn

question-and-answer period followed. Mr. Eisner said he had no plans to revive the Spirit at the present time. When someone commented on his dream-like artistic quality and asked him if he got his Spirit story ideas from dreams, he replied, "Well, to answer your question: No, I'm not on pot." Both men were extremely congenial and inspiring.

Later in the afternoon another panel discussion was held, the subject being "Comic Strips and Comic Books."



The comic strips were represented by Leonard Starr of the "Mary Perkins-On Stage" strip, while Gil Kane, Dick Giordano, and Joe Orlando took the comic book side. Generally, all agreed with Gil Kane when he mentioned that



*John Fantuccio with Bob Schoenfeld*

comic strips allow for more time and detail to be put into a piece of work, whereas comic books are run on a tighter schedule. Mr. Starr pointed out that strips too are run on a tight schedule, but that he can work further ahead of schedule if he plans to take a vacation, or that he can make up work if he falls behind. Both the comic strips and comic book artists then work against the clock in one way or another.

That evening, two events were held. A costume competition fared rather poorly when only a few fans appeared in costume. An auction held later fared somewhat better. So much for July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, saw the dealers looking tired but everyone else appeared to be enjoying themselves (even if they were a little poorer than when they arrived on Thursday). The first event began at twelve noon with a talk by Jim Steranko. You can add the youthful Mr. Steranko to the list of "crowd pleasers." He gave a quick talk on "How to



*Jim Steranko demonstrates how he draws Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

Draw for the Comics" and then went into questions, which he answered for over an hour and appeared to be enjoying

himself immensely. Need I add that the fans also were enjoying themselves? Mr. Steranko said he left the S.H.I.E.L.D. strip in order to work on a sword-and-sorcery character called Talon, which Marvel will publish. He says he's taking his time on this feature as it is a project he has had in mind for a long time and wishes the end result to be as near perfect as possible. He said that more thirty-five cent magazines might be forthcoming from Marvel but it all depends on how the thirty-five cent Spider-Man sells, for Mr. Steranko says Spider-Man is Marvel's most popular character, and "if he doesn't sell, then nothing will." Perhaps the most surprising comment to come from the talented artist was his admission that he would like to get out of comics and concentrate on painting. He says there is no money in comics and that he feels he would do better work in the painting field. As he puts it, "I'd much rather see Frank Frazetta's paintings than any comic work he might do." Mr. Steranko still remained quite popular with the fans after making the preceding remark, so maybe we're not as fickle as everyone says we are. Anyway, we could chalk up another enjoyable session.

Around 4:00 p.m., the great Milton Caniff gave one of his "Chalk Talks." Mr. Caniff drew a few sketches of Steve Canyon and associates for us and gave us a preview of an upcoming feature he wrote and drew for Esquire in which Steve Canyon speaks out on current affairs. It should be a "must" for all comic fans. Mr. Caniff did a sketch of a character about to appear



*Jerry Siegel*



*Roger Brand and Wayne Howard*

in "Steve Canyon" named "M. Toute." In reality, "M. Toute" is French comic collector Maurice Horn, one of the coordinators of the SCARP con. (Well, it *was* an international con, right?) Mr. Horne was present at the "Chalk Talk" and the resemblance between he and "M. Toute" is merely another tribute to the great Caniff style.

In between the talks by Mr. Steranko and Mr. Caniff, Phi Seuling held an impromptu auction, the second of the con, in order to raise funds for the con, which had run into Trouble with the hotel. It seems that if SCARP could not get





PHOTO: JOHN BENSON

Fans crowd around Wally Wood, seated left

eighty-five fans to stay at the Statler-Hilton for the four days, the hotel was going to let the con have the 18<sup>th</sup> floor rent-free. However, the con people were told by the management that only forty-seven checked in. We never did find out how Phil and SCARP fared, but as Phil put it, "If you hear we're in jail, you'll know why."

The last formal event of the con was held at 7:00 p.m. Charles Biro, creator of *Crimebuster*, *Crime Does Not Pay* and other Lev Gleason comics, gave a talk on his comic book career. He told us how Gleason approached him to do something about a character whose first issue hadn't been well received. Mr. Biro and associates tried to breathe more originality into the character and eventually the comic became a top seller. The name of the comic? *Daredevil*! Mr. Biro did a sketch of *Daredevil* and commented on the crime comics boom of the 1950s and subsequent crackdowns. He told us that the market was simply flooded and that most of the imitators did not attempt to match the standards he had set in *Crime Does Not Pay*. Eventually, he said, even Gleason's comics went downhill when Gleason ordered more comics along the line of *CDNP* to be turned out without hiring more people to do it! Everyone was expected to do too

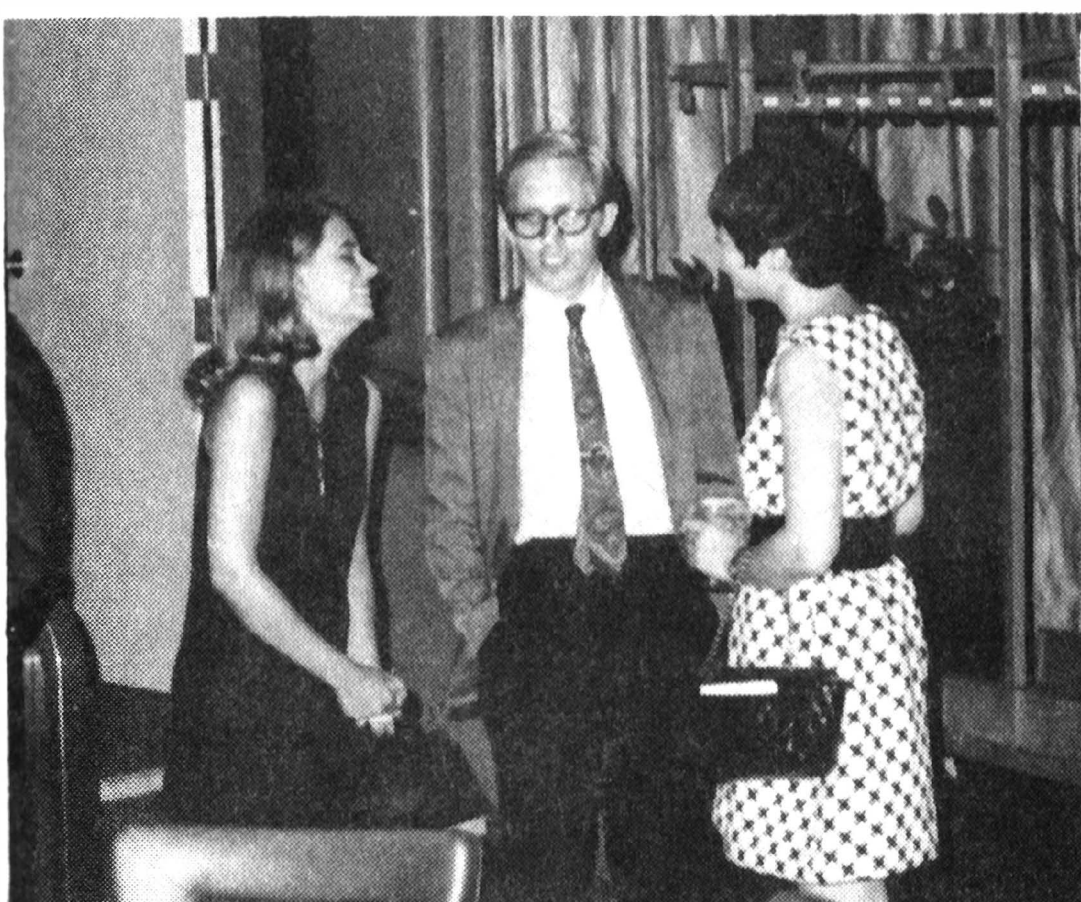


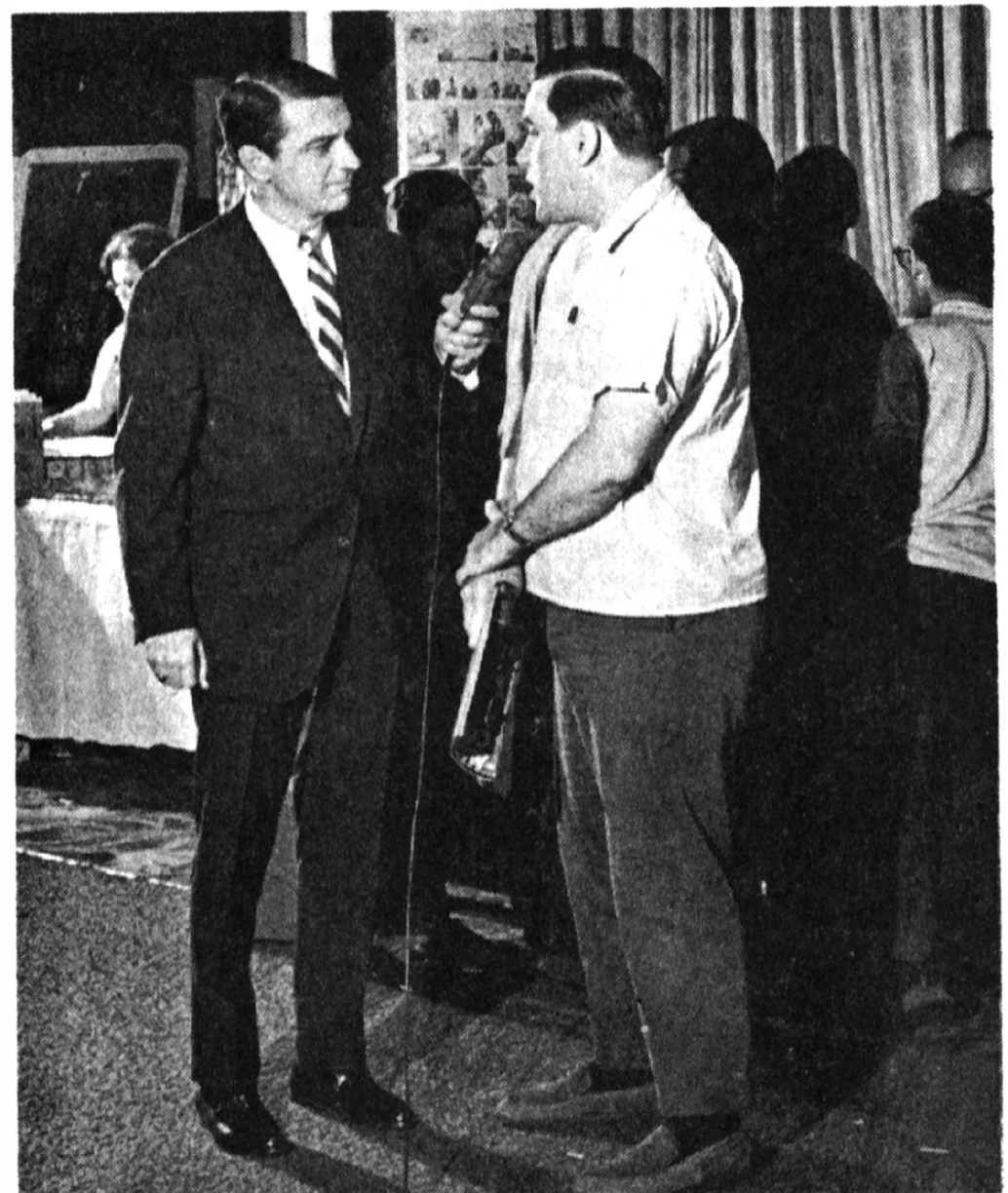
PHOTO: JOHN BENSON

Jean & Roy Thomas with Flo Steinberg

much and this was the time Mr. Biro got out of the comics. Today Mr. Biro works for the National Broadcasting Company.

The con came to an official close around 8:30 p.m. with Phil Seuling leading a "gripe session." Most of the fans seemed to agree that the con had been, by and large, a success. Phil mentioned that over 700 people had attended the con, by far the greatest number to attend a comicon. Just about every TV station in New York had covered the event and newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, and the *Newark Star-Ledger* all carried articles on the con. Phil was quick to point out that none of them had berated the affair as a "kiddie convention" but had covered the con in a very professional way. After this "gripe session," the 1968 SCARP convention came to a close.

In case you haven't gathered by now, I enjoyed myself. While a few of the events didn't go over well, the large majority of them were extremely interesting to the serious fan and always enjoyable.



Television reporter interviews Phil Seuling

One thing I haven't mentioned before which certainly needs mentioning is that with all the pros in attendance, and all the stuff on display, one factor is needed to make something like a comicon a success: fans. By and large, the best thing about a comicon is seeing people with the same interests as yourself; meeting people you may have corresponded with; talking over things that interest you with someone who really cares about what you are saying. The fans who attended the 1968 SCARP convention were a well-ordered, friendly group of people who represented fandom as an intelligent group of people rather than a bunch of adolescents who haven't quite grown up yet. ("Comic books? At your age?!") A con such as this is not just a pleasurable affair; it is a test of fandom and its readers. Pros will think more highly of fandom if they can see that its members are truly interested individuals. I'm glad to say that the SCARP convention passed with flying colors!

So maybe next year, I'll see *you* there, eh?

-end-





IRON  
BARS DO NOT A  
PRISON MAKE!

Says **NORMAN SICKWELL**, America's most hated con artist. "I've cheated a million of 'em!"

there were people who could be gypped because they liked the draw. Doorne said, "There's a sucker born every minute. Let's fleece him before he gets wise."

He suggested a new kind of art scam - a home study "art school" that would give us a wider range of fall guys, no matter where they lived.

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Some of the people who Famous (Con) Artists have robbed...

**Pamela Pebble** was trapped in a boring, low-paying job. After she took our course, she was trapped in *two* boring, low-paying jobs to pay our bill.

**Irv Nebbish** was a pipe-fitter's helper for a large firm. He took our course and has reached the top of the ladder: head pipe-fitter for the same firm (no thanks to us).

**John Jasnempt** was a sales clerk in a department store. When he saw our first bill, he robbed the store to pay it and has been running ever since.

Colorado housewife **Gladys Fink** lives 150 miles from the nearest big city, from which she fled when we disgraced her in her home town.

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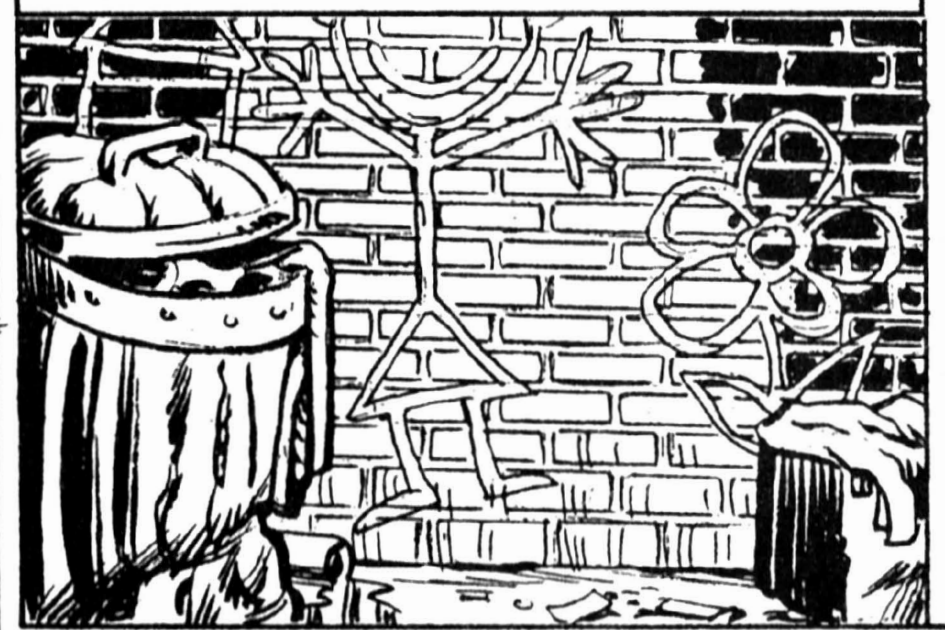
Re-created from *Sense of Wonder* #5...  
Presented here for the first time!



HEISENBERG ALLEY! SITUATED BETWEEN PAPPAZANO'S  
FRUIT STAND AND WASSERMAN'S MEAT MARKET.  
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT. . .



. . . BUT DURING THE DAY, IT PROVIDES A  
HAVEN FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN--  
A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN FLOCK  
TOGETHER, SHOUTING THEIR YOUTHFUL  
EXUBERANCE, UNMENACED BY THE SPEEDING  
TRAFFIC OF NEARBY STREETS! A PLACE  
FILLED WITH VARIED AND WONDROUS  
DELIGHTS. . . NOT THE LEAST OF THEM  
BEING THE MANY CHILDISH DRAWINGS WHICH  
BRIGHTEN THE PAVEMENT AND ALL THREE  
WALLS. . .



. . . FOR THIS IS A  
CHILDREN'S WORLD!  
MARK THAT WELL--  
IT'S NOT MEANT FOR  
THE LIKES OF YOU  
OR I! IT IS CRUDE,  
YET DIGNIFIED. . .  
BLEAK YET COLORFUL!  
IT IS, TO THOSE WHO  
UNDERSTAND SUCH  
THINGS, SIMPLY. . .



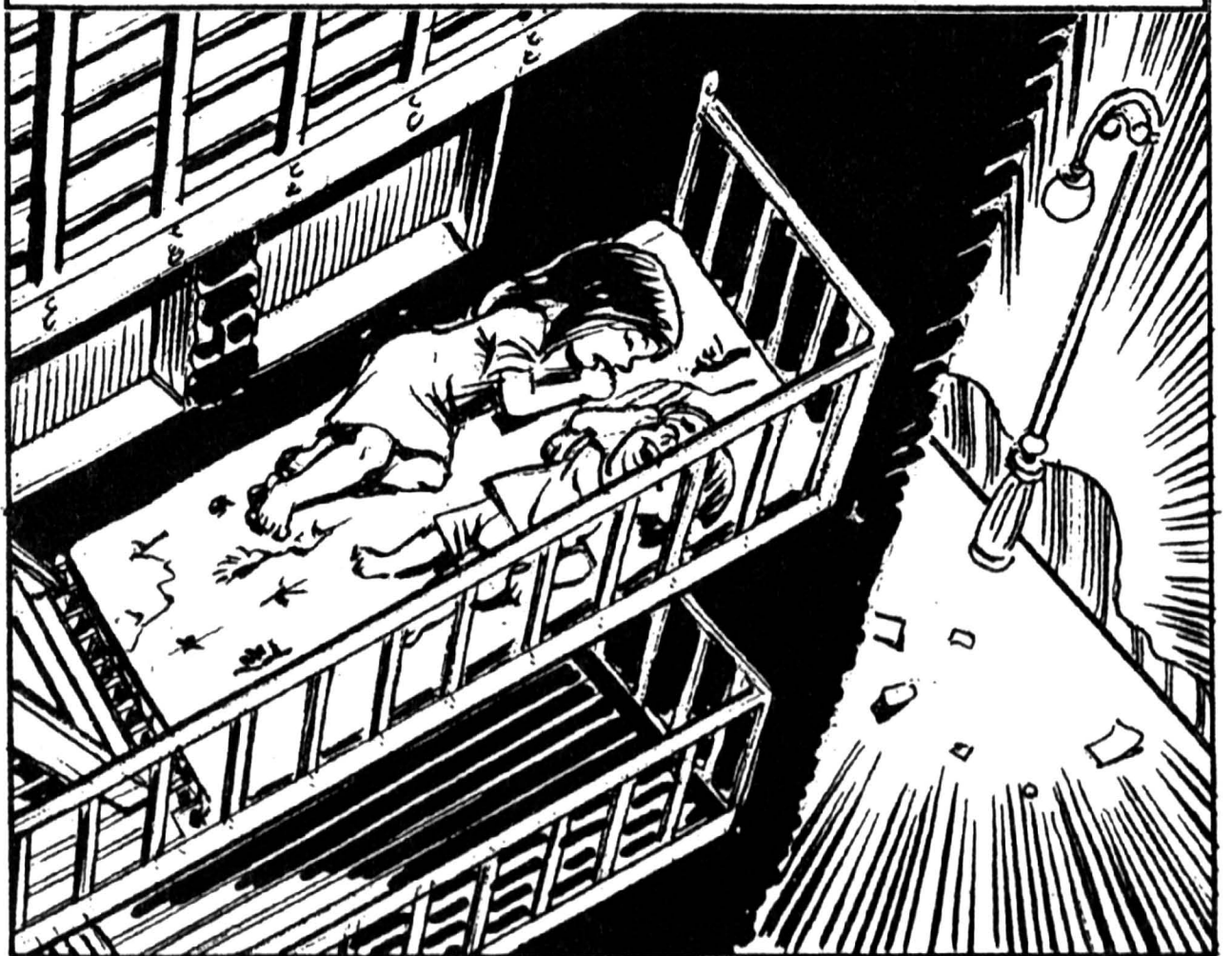
WRITTEN BY THOMAS FISHER  
LAYOUTS BY WILLIAM SCHELLY  
PENCILS/LETTERS BY MIKE WORLEY  
INKS BY ROB DAVIS



AND WHAT OF THOSE DRAWINGS? IT'S A WARM NIGHT, FOR THE HEAT OF THE DAY LINGERS ON. THE STEAMY TENEMENT BEDS ARE TOO HOT FOR MOST FAMILIES...



AMONG THESE ARE LORI--SHE'S SEVEN--AND HER 5-YEAR OLD BROTHER, JOEY. LORI'S THE NEIGHBORHOOD ARTIST! ANY KID WILL TELL YOU "LORI'S MAGIC--OR HER PENCIL IS ANYWAY!" AND BEST OF ALL, THEY LIVE JUST ACROSS THE STREET FROM HEISENBERG ALLEY!



AH... YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN LORI'S MAGIC PENCIL! OH, BUT YOU SHOULD MY FRIEND... YOU SHOULD! FOR IT CAN BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS THAT EVEN AN ADULT CAN UNDERSTAND. TO DO SO, WE NEED ONLY MEET THAT KINDLY OLD MAN, DR. R. EPHREM FOSS...

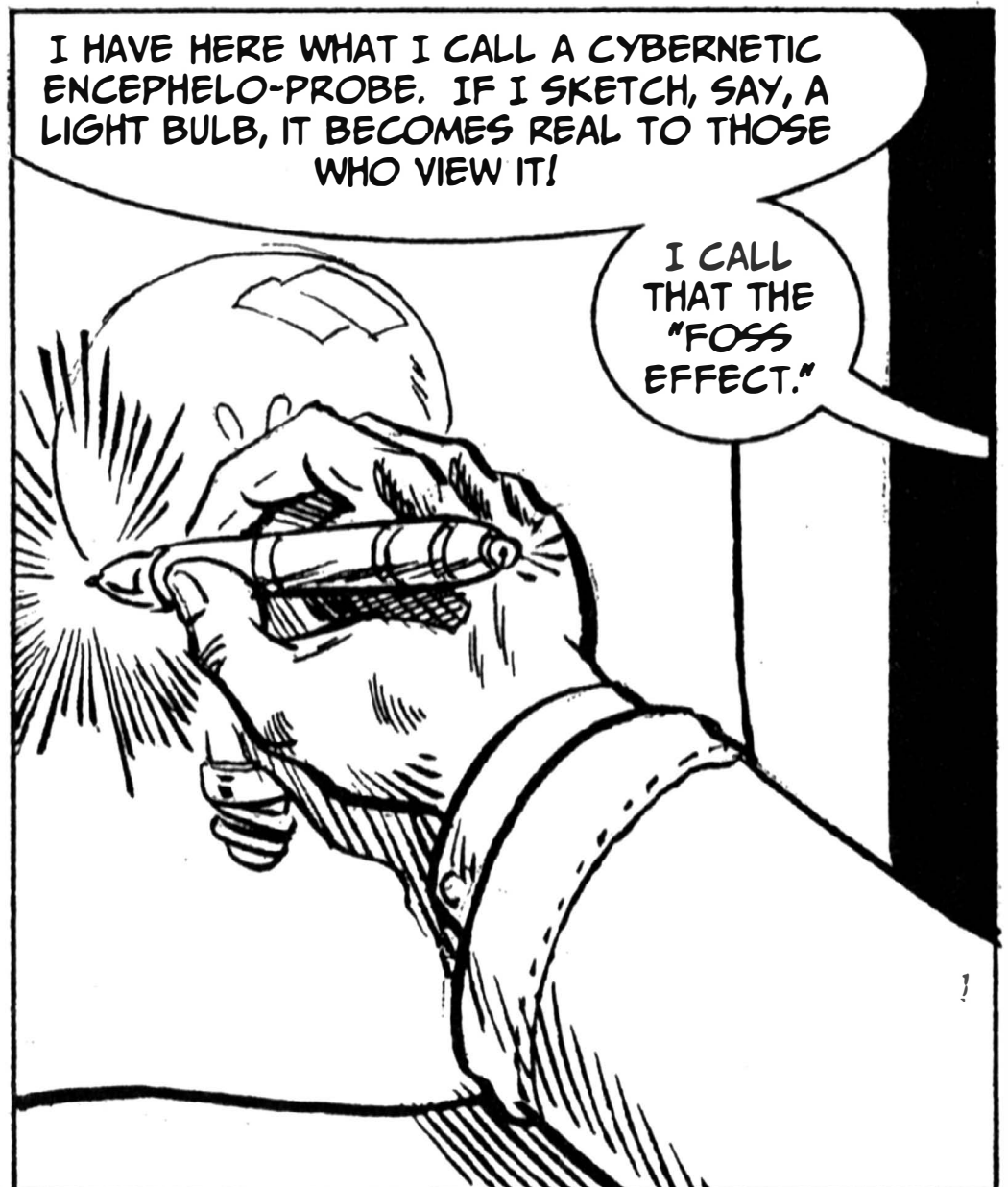


BUT I TELL YOU. THIS WILL WORK! THINK OF IT--A DIRECT MENTAL LINK-UP BETWEEN THE HUMAN MIND AND A COMPUTER!



I HAVE HERE WHAT I CALL A CYBERNETIC ENCEPHELO-PROBE. IF I SKETCH, SAY, A LIGHT BULB, IT BECOMES REAL TO THOSE WHO VIEW IT!

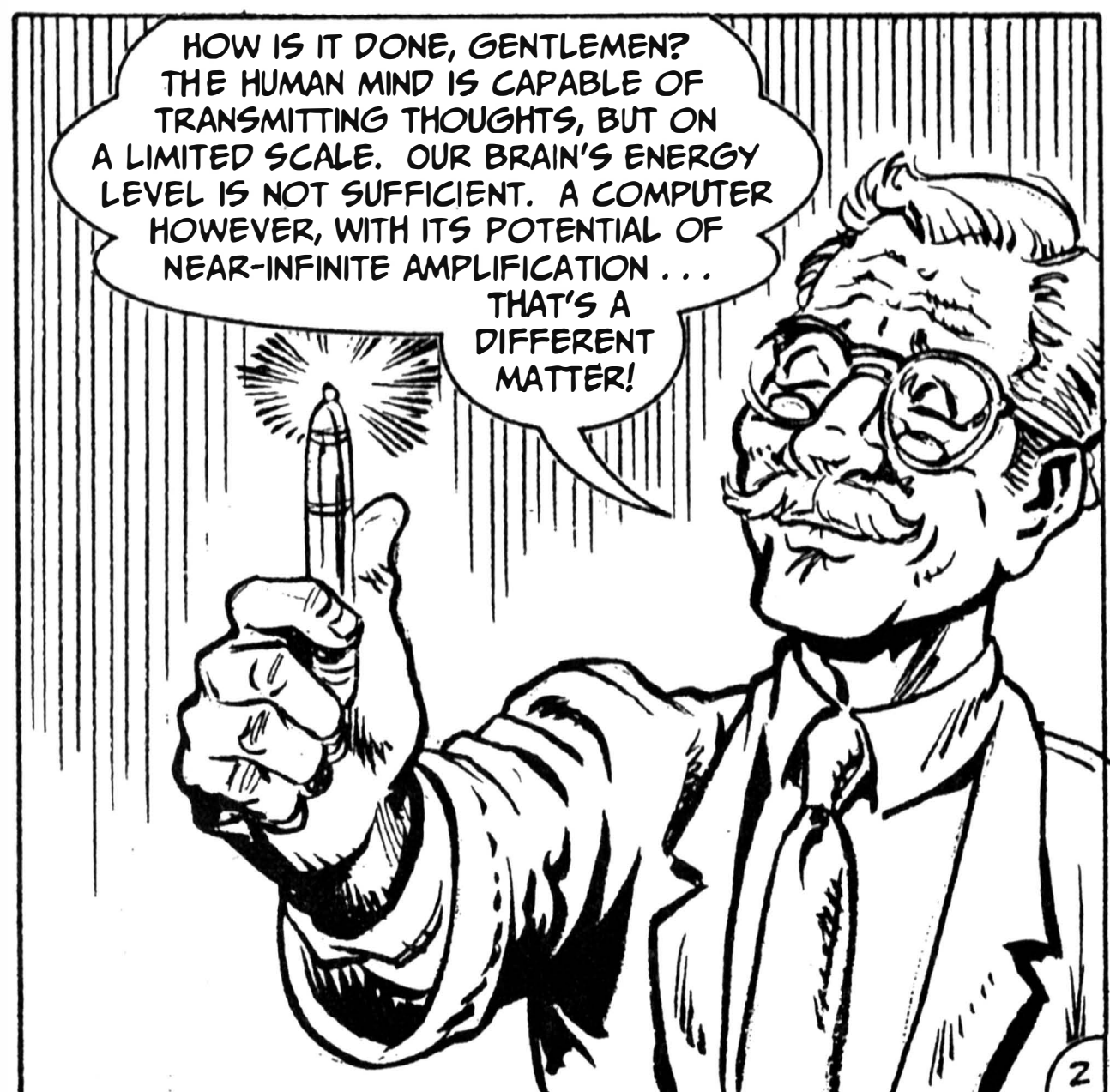
I CALL THAT THE "FOSS EFFECT."



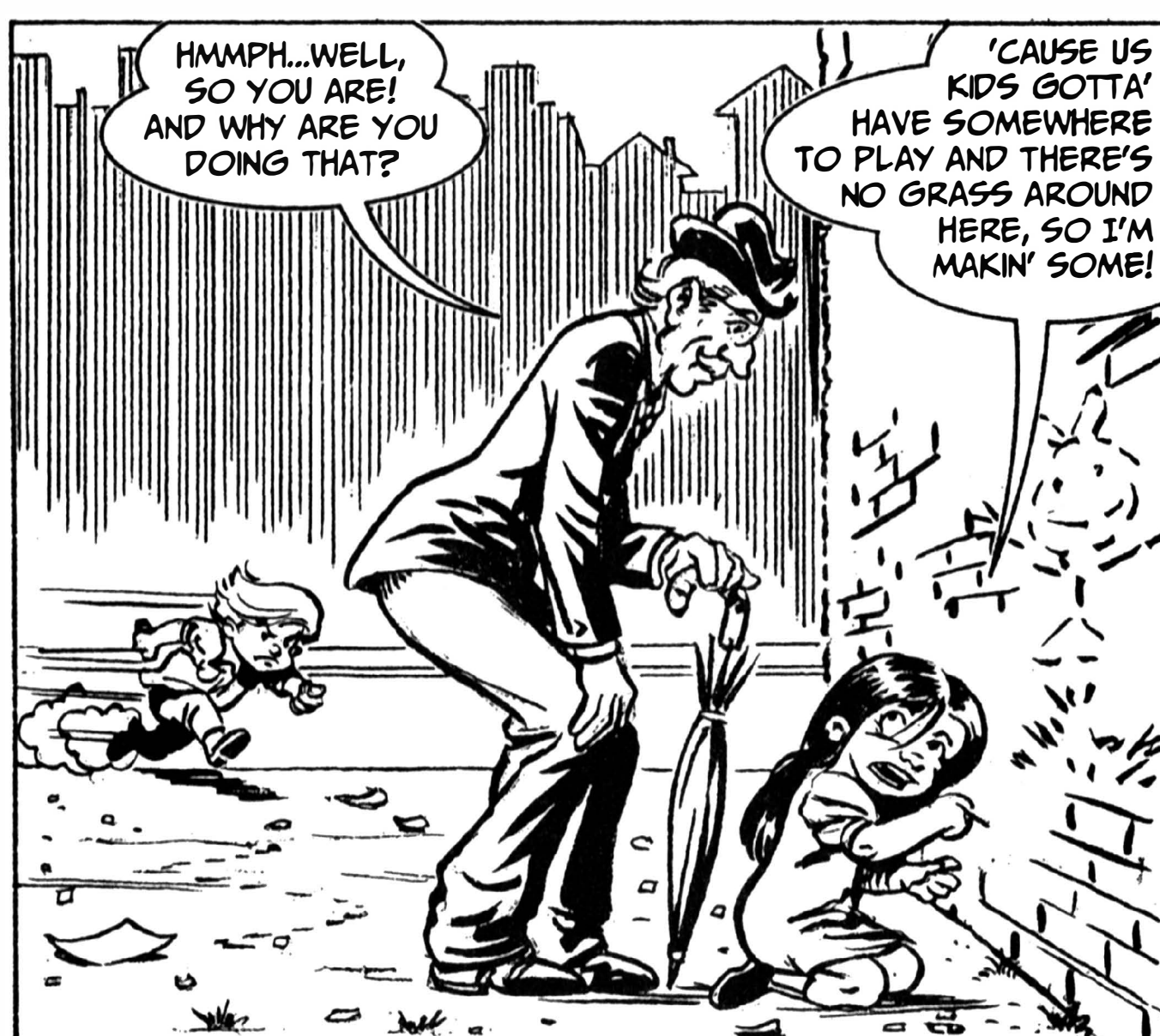
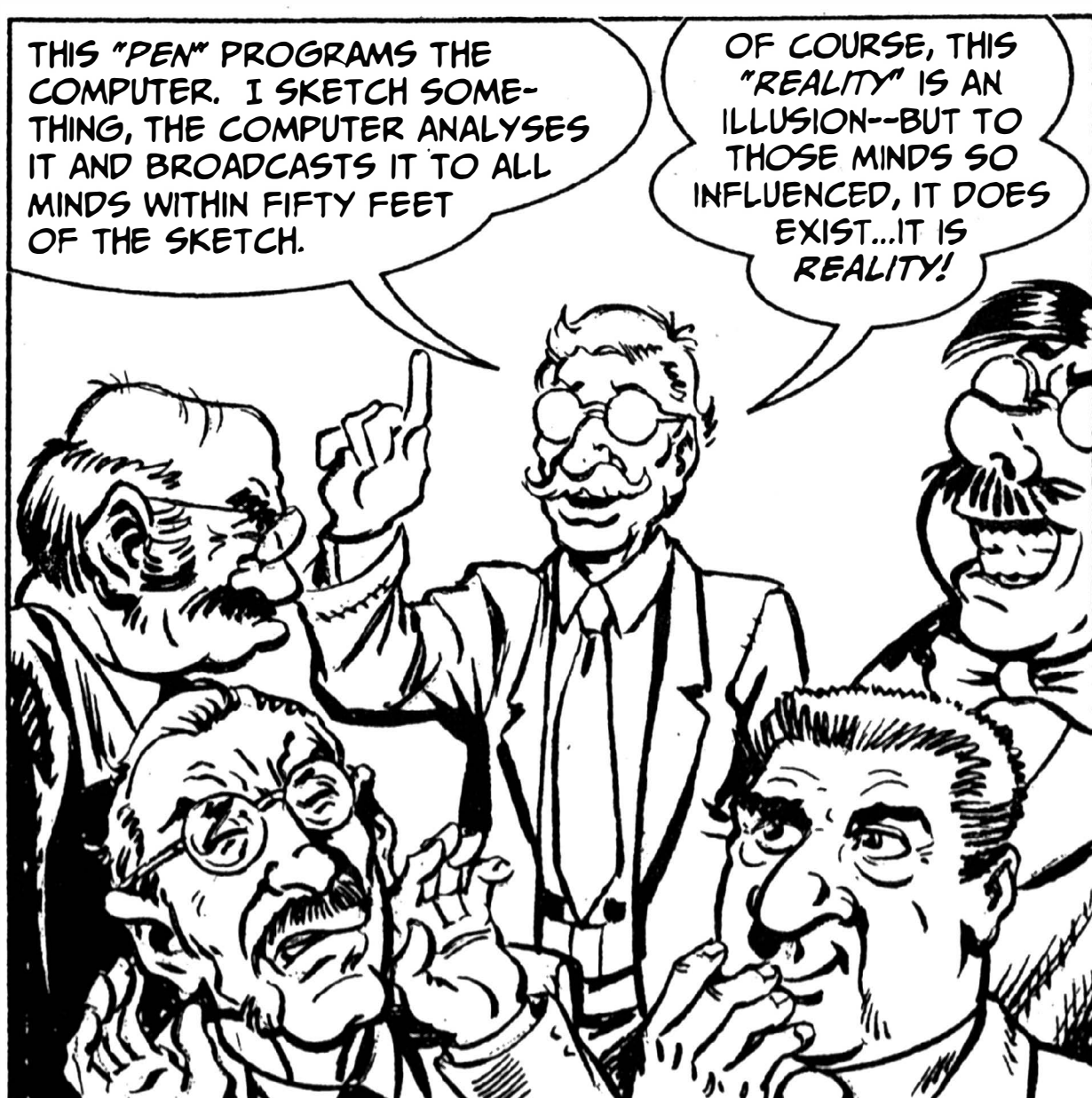
YOU CAN FEEL ITS HEAT, SEE ITS GLOW. IT BECOMES FOR ALL PURPOSES, AN ACTUAL LIGHT BULB, TO YOU--YOUR SENSES CAN TELL YOU NO DIFFERENTLY!



HOW IS IT DONE, GENTLEMEN? THE HUMAN MIND IS CAPABLE OF TRANSMITTING THOUGHTS, BUT ON A LIMITED SCALE. OUR BRAIN'S ENERGY LEVEL IS NOT SUFFICIENT. A COMPUTER HOWEVER, WITH ITS POTENTIAL OF NEAR-INFINITE AMPLIFICATION... THAT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER!











BUT BEFORE LORI CAN FINISH, DR. R. EPHREM FOSS IS GONE! PERHAPS IF SHE LOOKED UP SOONER, SHE MIGHT HAVE SEEN HIM LEAVE WITH A SPRING IN HIS STEP AND A TUNE ON HIS LIPS-- A MAN FINALLY AT PEACE WITH HIMSELF! AND AS FOR LORI, WELL, SHE BECAME THE OWNER OF THE "MAGIC PENCIL."

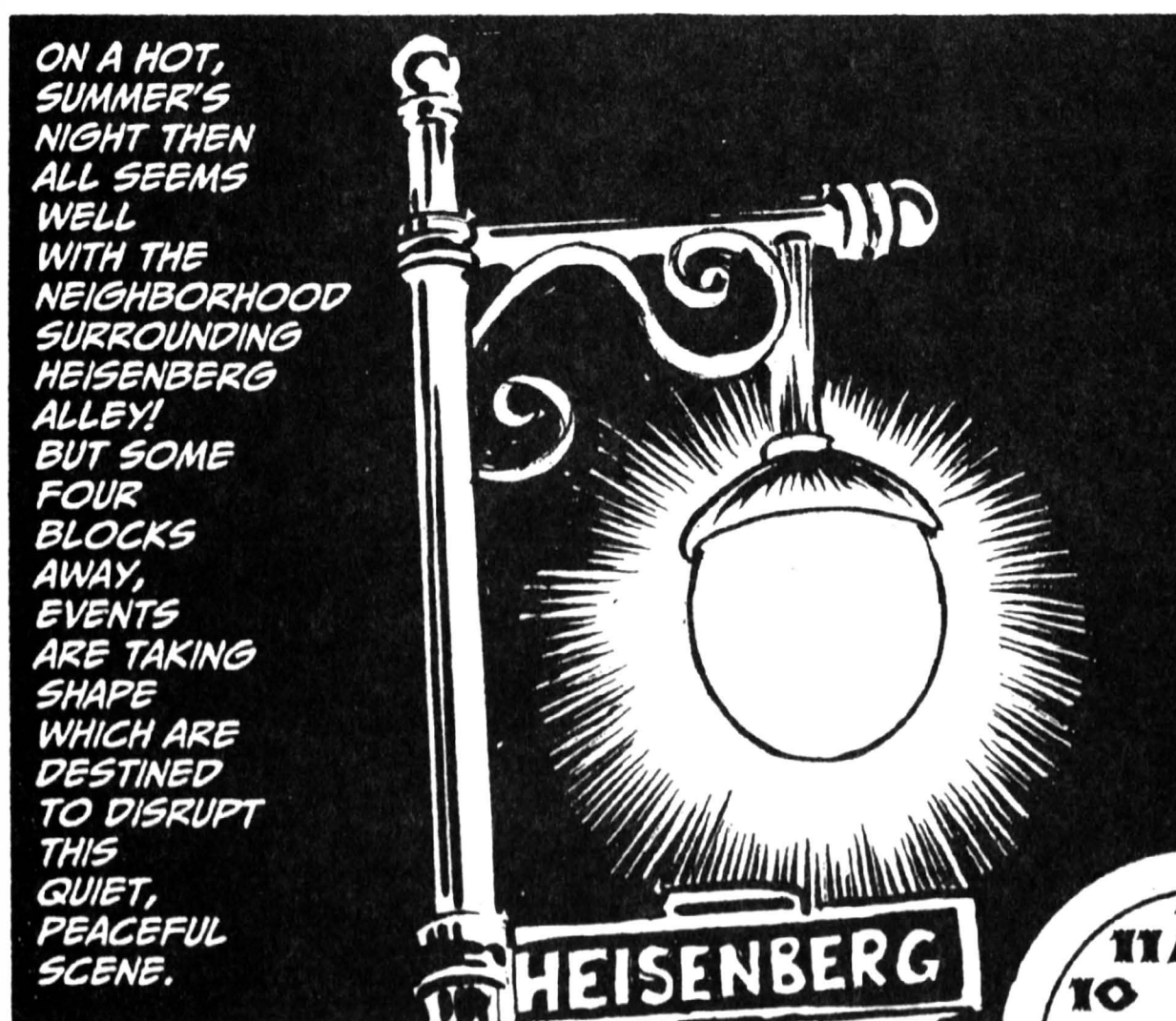


AND HEISENBERG ALLEY BECAME A WONDROUS PLACE! THE CHILDREN HAVE A DREAM WORLD ALL THEIR OWN, LIMITED ONLY BY THEIR IMAGINATIONS . . . WHICH IS TO SAY, VIRTUALLY NOT AT ALL!





THE ADULTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF HEISENBERG ALLEY HAVE NEVER LEARNED OF THIS "MAGIC PLAYGROUND"... NOR IS IT LIKELY THAT THEY EVER WILL. FOR, AFTER ALL, NONE OF THEM BOTHER THE CHILDREN AT PLAY... AND WHAT PARENT BELIEVES HALF THE TALES LITTLE ONES BRING HOME?













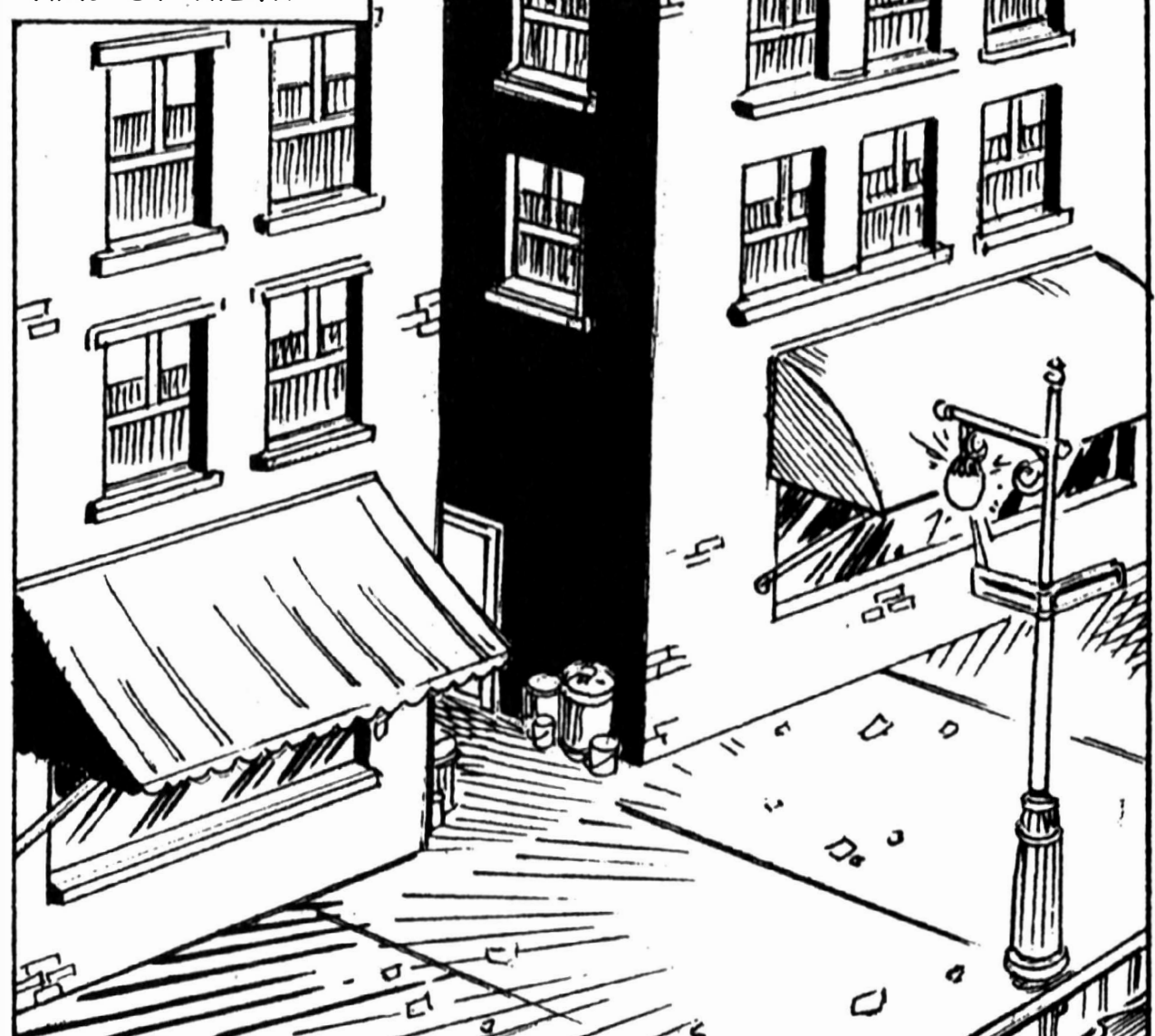
SUBSEQUENTLY, AS PEACE ONCE AGAIN COMES TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD...



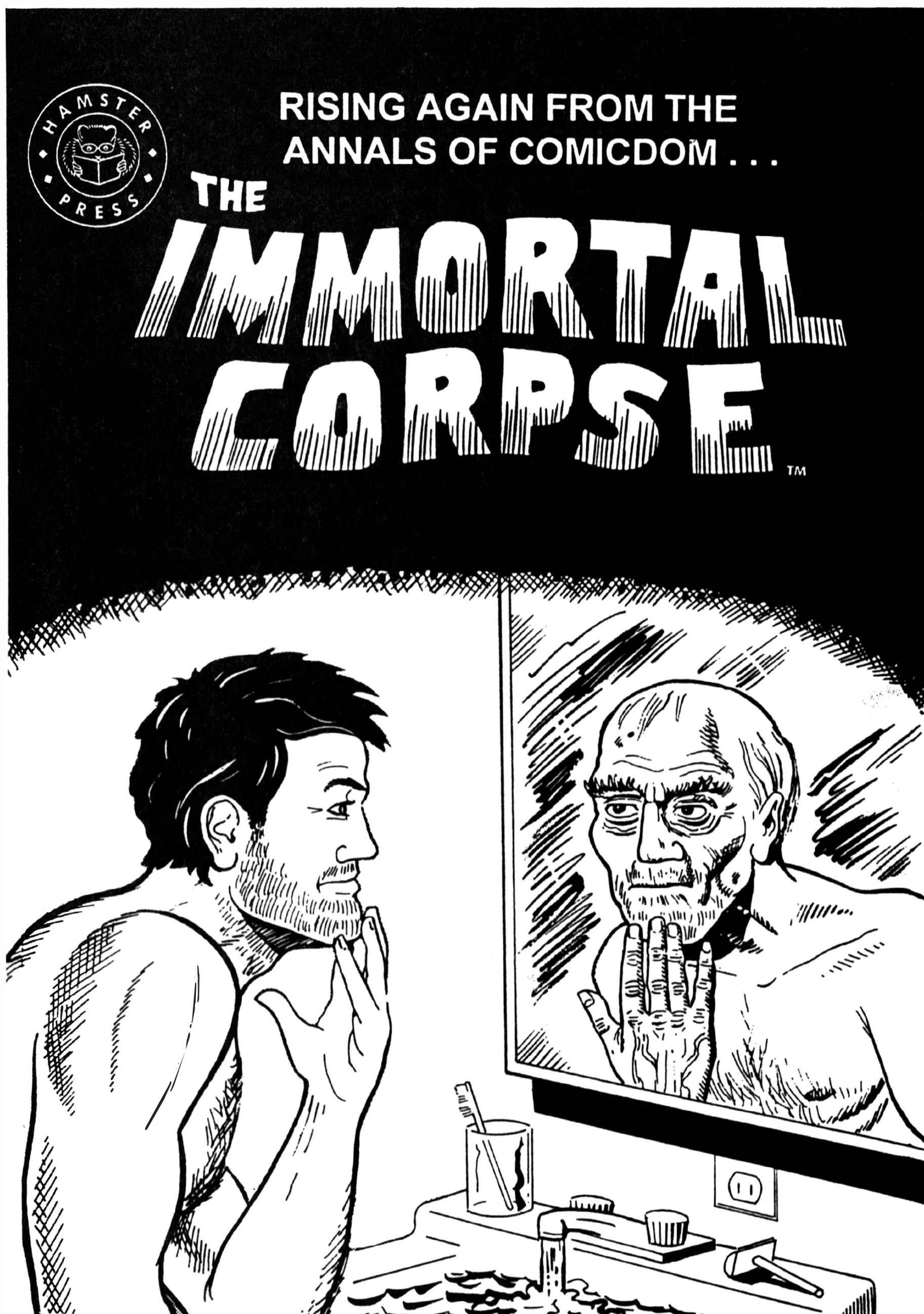
WHILE ON A NEARBY FIRE ESCAPE...



HEISENBERG ALLEY... IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT--







# “THE OGRE”

BY

**DICK TRAGESER  
AND  
BILL SCHELLY**

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The clock high on the New Amsterdam municipal tower stirred into grudging life, and began to count the early morning hours.

BONG ... BONG ... BONG.

Inside the city's block-long Municipal Art Museum, a black-cloaked figure paused as the chimes echoed through empty corridors, then resumed slicing an oil painting from its ornate frame. The Van Gogh portrait seemed to stare down at the intruder resentfully as it was finally cut loose and rolled into a cylinder. The burglar (for that's what he was) carefully stuffed the tube into a pocket of his cloak, then slowly turned and scanned the dark room, until his eyes lit on a plaster replica of Nefertite. He limped over to the bust, hefted it in his long-fingered hands, then deliberately raised it overhead and smashed it to the floor. The plaster shattered with a resounding noise, showering the room with chalky fragments. Seconds later a uniformed guard, pistol drawn, dashed into the darkened room and whirled toward each of its moonlit corners. The room was empty. The guard grimaced and rubbed a perplexed hand across his forehead.

“What the ....?”

At that moment the black-clad figure leaped from its perch atop a tall display case and landed, giggling, on the guard's back. The guard fell moaning to the floor as the intruder began clawing at his face with long, sharp fingernails, leaving bloody welts across cheeks, nose and forehead.

“Try to catch the Ogre, will you?” the interloper cackled as he slashed and tore. “Now you'll be as ugly as I am!”

The Ogre jumped up and ran to the main entrance, leaving the guard stretched out on the marble floor clutching his carmine face.

The hastily-convened meeting in Beardsley Hunzeker's office sat in various states of dishabille. Hunzeker, the managing director of the museum, had a tan raincoat belted over his enormous stomach, barely concealing the striped pajamas he wore beneath; Lt. Barney Muldoon, chief of the New Amsterdam Larceny Squad, was scratching the stubble that perforated his blue cheeks; Carol Adair, Hunzeker's pert young niece who had just returned from Europe (and who was society editor of the New Amsterdam Gazette) picked at the polish on her nails; H. Cully Jeffers, the museum's Chairman of the Board inserted a fresh cigarette in an ivory holder. Jeffers was the only dapper one in the group; even at 5:00 a.m., his neatly pressed pin-striped suit clung



lovingly to the \$50.00 silk shirt underneath, and his smooth, middle-aged face glowed with health under a rosy tan.

Hunzeker continued berating the unkempt Muldoon. "This is the third time we've been victimized in as many weeks, Lieutenant! Not to mention what this ... this Ogre creature has stolen from the other art galleries and exhibits in town. Do you realize our insurance company has threatened to cancel our policy if we don't provide better protection for our exhibits? And what have you done? Nothing! You can't even tell me why this maniac steals nothing but 'ugly' paintings and sculptures."

Muldoon held a broad hairy hand palm down. "Now take it easy, Mr. Hunzeker. You know that every time we've set a trap for this kook, he's managed to evade it. It's uncanny. It's like he knows in advance what we're going to do. Remember when we replaced your night watchmen with fifteen of our best patrolmen in museum security uniforms? They were here on special assignment for three lousy weeks. And what did the Ogre do? Busted in the first night we took them off."

Muldoon leaned back in his chair. "But we do know why he steals only ugly stuff ... for the same reason he messes up everyone he runs into. He's disfigured himself—really ugly—and he hates anyone or anything that's not as hideous as he is. Anyway, we think we're on the right track now. In fact, we expect to make an arrest within the next few days."

Carol Adair glanced up from her notebook, blue eyes dancing mischievously. "May I quote you on that Lieutenant?" she asked, throwing a dimpled smile his way.

"Now cut that out, Miss Adair," Muldoon exploded. "You newspaper people have been riding me like a circus pony ever since that maniac came to town. It's gettin' so I can't sleep, I growl at my kids and snap at my wife!"

"Why, Lieutenant, you sound more like a grumpy old bear than the head of our Larceny Squad."

"Okay, Miss Adair, have your little joke. Look, give me a break, can't you? I'm doin' the best I can and you know it. Our police psychiatrist's workin' on the case now and he may be able to predict this Ogre's next move. If he can, you can bet the Ogre'll be facin' a nice informal reception committee the next time he goes on the prowl. And that's confidential, Miss Adair, not for the newspaper!"

Cully Jeffers, the board

chairman, cleared his throat gently and leaned forward. "I do hope you'll let us in on what the police psychiatrist tells you Lieutenant. After the malicious depredations we've suffered, I'm sure we'd all be curious to know what motivates a specimen like the Ogre."

Muldoon bobbed his grizzled head savagely. "Yessir, Mr. Jeffers, you bet. You'll be the first ones to know, I promise."

Jeffers smiled silkily. "Fine, Lieutenant. I must mention to Commander Stone how well you're handling the case."

Muldoon's squinty eyes disappeared in a grin as Jeffers rose fluidly to his feet. "Now, gentlemen—and lady," Jeffers smiled at Carol, "I think we should adjourn until a more respectable hour."

Somewhere in the heart of the city of New Amsterdam, there exists a subterranean room measuring forty feet square. The room can be reached only by entering the city's ancient sewer system and following the appropriate branch line. Possibly it was a 'Priest's Hole,' prepared hundreds of years before when religious persecution was a routine occurrence. If one knows the proper route, one eventually finds himself facing a section of sewer wall on which "North Branch ... Aux. 912/6" is scrawled in fading red paint.

The heavy door swung open on protesting hinges, and the Ogre scampered into the large square room. In one gnarled, long-fingered hand he bore a cylinder of rolled-up canvas; in the other, a kerosene lantern. Chuckling softly, he spread the canvas on a crude wooden table, then swung the lantern high overhead as he perused it.

"Ah yes," he breathed, "Beautiful ... beautiful."

The painting thus described stared back at him through parted, scarred eyes. It was a portrait of an immensely ugly woman with swollen twisted nostrils and a flaccid red-lipped mouth behind which showed the rotted stubs of broken teeth. It's doubtful anyone had ever called it beautiful before. But as the Ogre held the lantern higher, and its yellow light illumined his features, his reason for calling it so became obvious. The painting might almost have been one of the Ogre himself. The flickering lantern flame revealed a face so grotesque, so painfully hideous, that it might have served as the model for a Halloween mask ... except that it was far too evilly frightening for a child to behold. The Ogre mumbled to himself

as he picked up the painting and shambled across the room.

"One day I'll make everyone look like us, Broken-Nosed Woman. Meanwhile, I'll leave you here in my 'Ugly Room' in good company. Look, everyone, I've brought a new companion for you!"

He again raised the lantern high, doing a clumsy pirouette that brought the room's paintings and sculptures into alternating light and shadow. On the far wall a Van Velder "Portrait of a Crone" leered drunkenly at the new acquisition; here a Betjeman portrait of a warlock winked through the gloom; everywhere statues and portraits of ugly, misshapen subjects. The very walls of the room seemed alive with disease and horror; but nowhere was there a work of art as hideous as the room's living occupant—the Ogre.

When Sam Walker's phone rang at 5:30 a.m. he was sleeping like a baby; for that's what he was at that moment: an infant. Due to a combination of circumstances that had resulted in Walker's bloodstream being contaminated with an experimental serum, he was able to change his age at will. He could, as the mood struck him, become a newborn infant in a matter of seconds ... or a living mummy, hundreds of years old. And since that occurrence, he had devoted his life to apprehending criminals—the breed of man who had been responsible for his becoming the freakish avenger known as the Immortal Corpse.

He awoke when the phone jangled, and before it had rung twice, he matured himself to a vigorous twenty-five years old.

"Hello, Sam Walker here," he said, fully awake.

The voice on the other end of the line crackled excitedly in the quiet room.

"Yes, I know who *you* are, Mr. Hunzeker," the Immortal Corpse said. "But how do you know me? ... You say I helped a friend of yours two years ago? Bemelmans? Yes, of course I remember him! Well, what can I do for you? ... Hmmm, I see ... well, no, offhand, nothing suggests itself, but I'll start giving it some serious thought. Yes, I'll be only too glad to do anything I can to help you catch that madman ... yes, I was about to suggest the same thing. Why don't I stop in at your office this afternoon ... about three? Fine."

Walker cradled the phone thoughtfully, then reached down and pulled a tin file from under his bed.



"Now let's see, where did I put those newspaper clippings about the Ogre?"

If the Immortal Corpse had made his appointment with Hunzeker at 2:30 that afternoon, rather than 3:00, he would have witnessed a highly emotional scene between his host and H. Cully Jeffers, the museum's Chairman of the Board.

Jeffers was striding angrily back and forth in front of Hunzeker's big walnut desk.

"Dammit, man, of *course* I realize you're the director of the museum. But I'm Chairman of the Board! And I say you have no right to call in outside help without my approval!"

Hunzeker pulled his coat sharply around his immense paunch and squeezed his fat hands together as though Jeffers' neck was between them. "I only want to catch the Ogre, Mr. Jeffers. Since the police have been ineffectual, I felt sure you'd be pleased if I got a man of Sam Walker's stature to help us."

"Of course, Hunzeker, of course. We can use every bit of help we can get. But this man's not even a licensed detective. And frankly I've heard some very strange stories about Sam Walker ... people talk about him as though he's a modern-day warlock. How do you even know we can trust him?"

"Because Adolf Bamelmans told me we could, and I'm sure you wouldn't doubt his word. Walker successfully performed a similar service for him a year ago. As for the stories you've heard, well, I've been told the man's a master of disguise. Makes himself look old or young in the blink of an eye. That's the secret of his success."

Jeffers snorted. "Bosh! Master of disguise, for Lord's sake. That sort of thing went out with Sherlock Holmes, Hunzeker."

"I don't care, Jeffers," Hunzeker said stubbornly. "He gets results. I don't know, or care, how. He'll be here in," he looked at his watch, "about fifteen minutes, if you care to wait and interrogate him personally."

"I wouldn't waste my time." Jeffers strode out of the office slamming the door savagely behind him.

Sam Walker knocked on Beardsley Hunzeker's door promptly at three o'clock and entered towing a short gray-bearded man in his wake. "I hope you don't mind, Mr. Hunzeker," Walker said, smiling. "I've asked Dr. Hugo Semmelweiss to sit in; he's a well-known expert specializing in



Ogre drawing by Landon Chesney from *Bombshell* #6 (1966)

psychopathology. I thought perhaps he could contribute something to our understanding of ..."

"Of course, of course. Dr. Semmelweiss' reputation is well-known—even to a crusty old museum director like myself," Hunzeker said, rising with his hand outstretched.

At that very moment, a black-robed figure was stealthily climbing a wooden ladder that led from the lobby of the 'Olde Tyme Nickelodeon'

theater to the projection booth high overhead. The figure glanced quickly around at the top of the rungs. To his left, the projectionist slumped in a wooden chair, dozing, as Fatty Arbuckle and Mabel Normand ran through the steaming projector, throwing pies and doing pratfalls. The Ogre stealthily grasped two heavy octagonal cans that were stenciled "Lon Chaney, *Phantom of the Opera*, 1925 (Original Print)--HANDLE WITH CARE!" and attached their ring



handles to a hook that hung from a pulley rope. He began lowering them through the trapdoor to the lobby below, when the projectionist heard the pulley squeak and jumped up shouting, "*Hey you—get away from there! What the hell do you—Good Lord, man! What's the matter with your face?*"

The Ogre growled and leaped at the projectionist, clawing and biting. "This ... grrr ... is what happened," he screamed, "... to my face, *pretty boy!!*"

The projectionist screamed and slumped to the floor, squeezing his palms against the blood that flowed from his face. The Ogre raised his head and squealed with laughter, then ran to the pulley rope and slid down it to the floor of the lobby. Within moments he had disappeared through a sewer opening while the theater crowd boiled out of the room, appalled by the screams and mad laughter they'd heard.

The next morning a small news item appeared in the lower left corner of the Gazette's front page. Under the heading "Museum Closure Announced," it read:

The New Amsterdam Museum announced today it will be closed to the public for the next two weeks due to a scarcity of guards. An epidemic of influenza has incapacitated their regular security staff, and the museum has been unable to find suitable replacements. During the closure, only one watchman is needed for each shift. These guards have been culled from the roll of retired personnel who have been called back to duty during the emergency.

Ambrose, the bartender at Charlie's Cafe across from the museum reacted typically to the news item.

"Wow, wait'll the Ogre sees this! They might just as well send him a written invitation to steal. Geez, you'd think they'd have more sense than to put that kinda news in the papers, wouldn't ya?"

Ambrose looked across the bar, winked at his cronies, then leaned over and nudged a strange old man who was quietly sipping a beer. The man was very old, thin, and white-haired, and his face looked like a parchment map of the Los Angeles freeway. "Hey, old-timer," Ambrose shouted, on the assumption that anyone over sixty had to be deaf, "you want a good job? The museum across the street's lookin' for guards, I hear."

Ambrose and his customers

laughed so heartily at this witticism they nearly missed the old man's quiet reply.

"I got news for ye. They already hired me, sonny!"

Ambrose stared at the wrinkled old coot, stunned, then broke into a fresh gale of laughter. "Hey, gang, ya hear that? This old geezer's one of the new watchmen over at the museum! I'm glad ya tole me, old-timer; I'll be able to sleep better nights, knowin' you're on the job! Ha ha ha haaar!"

Sam Walker finished his beer and limped to the swinging doors. "Ye just keep laughing, sonny. Us old guys might be tougher than ye think!"

"Har haar! Okay, old timer, I'll warn the Ogre to be on the look-out if he stops in here for a beer!"

"Okay, sonny, ye just do that."

It was two-thirty in the morning and a gibbous moon threw pale shadows through the tall windows of the gloomy museum as Sam Walker dragged his old body through the corridors. If the Ogre watched, he saw protecting the museum's valuable artifacts only a frail old man who'd barely the strength to stand upright.

The Immortal Corpse had reached the end of the corridor and turned into a bisecting hallway when an ominous crash resounded through the building. It came from the direction of the Blue Room, where the museum displayed its prize possession, a Rembrandt van Rijn painting titled "Nightmare in the Flesh." Walker instantly reversed his age to an athletic twenty-five and raced in that direction, his sturdy young legs pumping like pistons. As he neared the Blue Room's archway, a short thick figure moved across the opening, blocking out the moonlight, and Walker sprang, clutching it in sinewy arms. He was amazed to find that the Ogre was tough as nails; the figure he clasped was as inflexible and hard as a locomotive.

Walker shouted as he toppled the unresisting figure to the marble floor, "Okay, Ogre, it's all over! You want to give up peacefully, or do you want your pieces scattered all over the nice clean floor?"

The figure neither moved nor spoke. It just slumped on the floor, with the Immortal Corpse spread-eagled on top of it.

"Speak up, Ogre, or I'll shake you apart!" With that, Walker slammed his captive against the hard marble. There was a clang, and in the dimness Walker was horrified to see the Ogre's head part from his body and roll slowly across the tiles.

"*Good lord!!*"

Walker sprang to his feet and raced to the light switch, flooding the room with dazzling illumination. There on the floor lay a suit of 14<sup>th</sup>-century armor, its helmet rolling back and forth a short distance away. From the suit's ankles, a length of rope led to an open window.

"So that's it," Walker murmured. "Pulled it across the doorway on its wheeled platform after attracting my attention by making a noise outside the window. He may be insane, but he's certainly not stupid."

The sound of a siren grew in the distance, and within seconds a heavy pounding at the front door announced the arrival of the police. The Immortal Corpse aged himself back to an approximate ninety and shuffled to the entrance to admit Lt. Muldoon and four plainclothes officers.

"What's that ye say, Officer? I'm a leetle deaf ye know. Ye say somebody heard a noise and saw a light and called ye on the tellyphone? Yup, must've been some fool kid here playin' a prank. C'mere, I'll show ye what he done."

As the group examined the suit of armor and rope, there came a piercing scream through the building, followed by a dull thud. Muldoon and his men raced from the room with Walker slowly following, cursing his ancient disguise. By the time Walker caught up, two of the detectives were bringing in a stretcher for one of their cohorts who lay writhing on the floor.

"What's happened, officer?" Walker quavered. "Was there an accident?"

Muldoon gritted yellow teeth. "No accident, old man. It was the Ogre. He must've had things pretty well figured out, and like fools we stepped right into his trap. While we were all back there, he was hiding near the door."

The bloody officer grunted as the two plainclothesmen lifted him onto the stretcher.

"That's right. I thought he was a statue there behind the door," he groaned, "and then all of a sudden the damned thing came to life and climbed all over me, clawing and biting like a maniac. I'm sorry, Lieutenant."

"Forget it, Moehring. It could've happened to anyone and at least the Ogre didn't get anything for his troubles this time."

The officer on the stretched groaned anew. "Yes he did; that's the worst part of it, Chief! I saw him snatch a funny little statue from the floor just before he ran out. It must've fallen from his pocket."



Walker struck his wrinkled forehead. "Oh, no, sonny! Don't tell me he got the third Dynasty Fertility Goddess? The thing's worth twenty thousand dollars!"

The Ogre had, indeed, made off with the solid gold, ugly, pot-bellied statue. He had obviously gained access to the museum in some mysterious fashion (who would've thought to check the sewer pipe lid in the basement?), tied a rope to the suit of armor's legs and thrown the other end through the window's bars. Then he'd made a racket, waited for Walker to come to the Blue Room, pushed (not pulled) the armor across the doorway, and, while Walker struggled with his imaginary foe, had slipped around the door and into the hall. Then he had run to the Egyptian Room, heisted the statue, and hidden himself behind the door. When Muldoon left only one man to guard the door, the Ogre had taken his chance to make an escape.

The next morning, a crestfallen group assembled in Hunzeker's office. Muldoon, Jeffers, Walker (who'd now been introduced to Muldoon as his real self), Carol Adair, Dr. Semmelweiss, and Hunzeker himself. The conversation was desultory; no one felt in a self-congratulatory mood. Dr. Semmelweiss kept pulling on his gray beard and muttering, "I thought sure he'd stay away. It was so obviously a trap that he should have suspected it. How could he have known he'd be able to slip through your fingers so easily? With all apologies to you, Mr. Walker."

Sam Walker shrugged broad young shoulders. "No apology necessary, Doctor. The Ogre made a fool of me, no question about it."

There was a short silence, broken by Carol Adair, who hurriedly made conversation to cover the general embarrassment. "I remember in Prague, there was once a man who stole exhibits from a surgeon's office of all things. The police set traps for him, just as you have for the Ogre, but he never stole anything else."

Absentmindedly, Walker asked, "Did you spend some time in Prague, Miss Adair?"

"Oh, yes, I've been all over Europe. In fact, I spent most of my life there. Daddy was an Army officer, you see, and I traveled with him and mummy everywhere they went until they ... until ..." Carol swallowed hard and jumping up, strode to a window and looked out.

Hunzeker coughed and spoke in hushed tones. "My brother and his wife died in an accident in Europe

several years ago, Mr. Walker. Their plane crashed in flames and they were ... cremated. It was only by a miracle that Carol escaped injury. As it was, she was thrown clear with her leg broken, and had to lie in the snow for hours, listening to the screams of the passengers trapped inside, not knowing whether her parents were among those crying for help."

"Hmmm, yes, that would fit all right." Sam Walker leaned forward and stared at him. "Tell me, Mr. Hunzeker, when was the last time you actually saw Carol? Before she came to live with you last year, I mean?"

Hunzeker glanced toward the window at Carol Adair's stiff back. "Why, I suppose it must have been ... let me see ... before she was of high school age, I remember. Hmmm, I suppose it must have been twelve or thirteen years ago. We corresponded during the intervening years, of course, but I suppose the last time I actually saw Carol—before she came to stay with me, as you said—was when she was about twelve."

"Then you didn't know what she'd look like before she arrived?"

"Well, no. In a general way I did, of course, but girls change so much when they reach maturity, you know."

Walker got up and walked slowly to the window to stand beside Carol. "Miss Adair, didn't you do a story for the Gazette not long ago on New Amsterdam's antiquated sewer system?"

Carol turned and smiled. "How clever of you, Mr. Walker! And here I thought no one ever troubled to read my little exposes."

Walker rested his hand lightly on her shoulder. "When Mr. Hunzeker called me in on this case, I troubled to find out all I could about *all* of you, on the off-chance one of you might be the Ogre. You see, it particularly disturbed me that here at the museum, where the greatest precautions had been taken to prevent his depredations, the Ogre came and went as he pleased. It indicated a leak somewhere. Either one of you ... knowingly or not ... was tipping the museum's hand to the Ogre, or one of you who sat in on these meetings was, himself, the Ogre."

Carol turned her pert face toward the Immortal Corpse. "And I suppose you think that I'm that hideous maniac, Mr. Walker? I suppose because you've deduced that the Ogre hides in the city's sewers, and who would know them better than someone who wrote an article about them for the newspaper? Interesting—but I can't say that I'm flattered that you think I look like the Ogre!"

The group sat in stunned silence, listening to the dialogue between Walker and the attractive young woman. They couldn't believe Walker really thought Carol was the Ogre, but they were fascinated to know what he was leading up to.

Walker smiled. "No, Miss Adair, I don't think *you* are the Ogre at all. In fact, I think you're quite good looking; but I doubt if your father can say the same thing."

"Hold on there, Walker. Didn't you hear me tell you that her father is dead? That he died in the airplane crash?"

"Let me finish, Mr. Hunzeker. Then I'll be delighted to answer any questions. Item Number 1: No one *knows* if Mr. Adair did die in the crash. If Carol lived, then certainly he could have." Walker pulled a small spool of tape from his pocket. "Item Number 2: a tape-recorded telephone conversation with a certain Dr. Lichman of Prague, a famous plastic surgeon. After consulting his records, he remembered that a girl fitting Miss Adair's description brought in a man whose face and body was a mass of contusions and blistering caused by great heat and sharp glass. The doctor will verify that it *was* you, Carol, and that you identified the man as your father. The doctor also said that, sadly, he couldn't do much for the man. Too far gone. All he could do was treat the wounds with antiseptic. Item Number 3: As you mentioned, the only logical egress and entrance the Ogre could have used for each crime was the sewer system, and only you of this group knows that system intimately. Well enough to teach another person about it?"

"Will we find a concealed room with the missing art treasures when we make a thorough search of the system? And will your fingerprints as well as your father's be all over that room? Item Number 4: How did the Ogre know all our plans? Our every move? I suspect you've made frequent trips to that room."

"And the most important item of all, Item Number 5: Dr. Semmelweiss will, I'm sure, attest to the traumatic effect such an accident would have on any man, coupled with the horrible death of his wife and the knowledge that he would be grotesque the rest of his life. Those many factors could easily shatter his mind. A few tests will ...."

"There's no need to go any further, Mr. Walker. Yes—yes, all you've said is true. How you found it all out I don't know. That *was* my father I took to Dr. Lichman. When we learned that nothing could be done,



a strange change came over him. He became, well, almost obsessed with his ugliness." She turned to face him, tears in her eyes. "I couldn't turn him in. I just – couldn't!" She took a handkerchief from her handbag and dabbed her eyes dry. "Anyway, it wasn't long after we returned to America that he committed his first crime. Knowing that such a conspicuous person would be easily found, I took him to that room in the sewer system I'd learned about when I wrote the article. That seemed to quiet him, so I hoped maybe he'd get better. I know I should have turned him in, but...."

"Hold it, Miss Adair. Spare us the hearts and flowers, because you are just as guilty as he is."

"I ... what?" she asked, incredulously. "I know I've aided a criminal in avoiding capture ...."

"Oh no. You'd like us to believe it was love that motivated you to protect your father, but that airplane crash apparently also jarred your mind. Because you schemed to profit from your father's affliction. How else would he know just where and when to do for his 'ugly' booty? He had somebody goading him on, someone giving him the technical details. He had to have someone bringing him food and other things. And I've discovered from my underworld contacts that a few of his prizes have already been marketed to the highest bidder—an unlikely practice for someone who loves such ugly things."

Carol whirled from the window. "Damn you," she screamed. "*Damn you!* No one else would have figured it all out!" She came at him, her long fingernails poised to tear at him. But in the split second it took for her to reach him, Sam Walker rapidly made himself older. Fifty ... seventy ... ninety ... two hundred years of age ... and now it was a wrinkled, sagging mummy that slumped inside Walker's clothes, a mummy that stared at the psychotic girl through hollow, obsidian eyes; whose mouth sagged

open to reveal broken black teeth protruding from rotted broken gums. The mummy twisted his misshapen head up at the end of its scrawny folded neck and grinned at Carol. And she screamed ... screamed again and again, until Hunzeker and Muldoon led her, twitching, from the office.

It was nightfall by the time the small search party comprised of Walker, Muldoon, Hunzeker and Jeffers found the hidden subterranean room. They were all weary from hours of stumbling through the dank, musty caverns that were a honeycomb beneath one of the oldest cities in the country. Then too, it didn't help that the latest set of maps hadn't included many of the minor byways through the shadowy maze. And the portly Hunzeker wasn't as agile as his companions.

Motioning for silence, Walker handed his lantern to Jeffers and pressed his ear to the rotten wood door. Inside he could hear nothing. He finally knocked lightly as Carol might have. Immediately there were the sounds of someone running to the door. A rusty latch was pulled aside and the door swung open on complaining hinges.

"Come in, my dear. You come to...." The Ogre stopped short when he saw who it was, then sullenly spoke. "You. So—you've found me, have you?" A smile grew on his wet red lips. "Ah well, I submit myself to your power. I know I couldn't possibly beat all four of you."

As they entered the doorway with handcuffs, he suddenly leaped on to the table behind him, laughed shrilly, and yanked a thick rope that hung from the ceiling.

"*Look out!*" Walker cried as he pushed everyone from the room. An avalanche of huge stone bricks and powdered cement crashed down with a thunderous roar, giving forth a blinding smoke screen. Even before the cave-in was over, Walker yelled,

"*Join hands! Don't let him get past us!*"

They stood, then, forming a small cordon around the now-demolished entrance. But no one tried to push past them. Finally, the thick dust cleared a little and they could see what had happened. Either Carol or the Ogre himself had foreseen this situation and attached a rope to certain key bricks in the already-loose ceiling. When he pulled the rope, the Ogre buried everything in the room—including, apparently, himself.

"Well, Mr. Walker; it seems as if we've heard the last from my brother, the ... er ... Ogre. I don't see how he could still be alive under all that rubble."

"He couldn't be. But if you'll look carefully, you'll see that the covering is off the air vent." Walker was right. A wire mesh square was half-buried in the rubble and the vent yawned hollowly at them. "He's even cleverer than we thought. I'm afraid, gentlemen, we haven't seen the last of the Ogre."

"C'mon, let's salvage what paintings and other articles we can from this mess."

By the time all the articles were returned to the Metropolitan Museum for restoration (miraculously only a few were greatly damaged), it was dawn. The newspapers hadn't gotten onto the story yet, so the group was still alone.

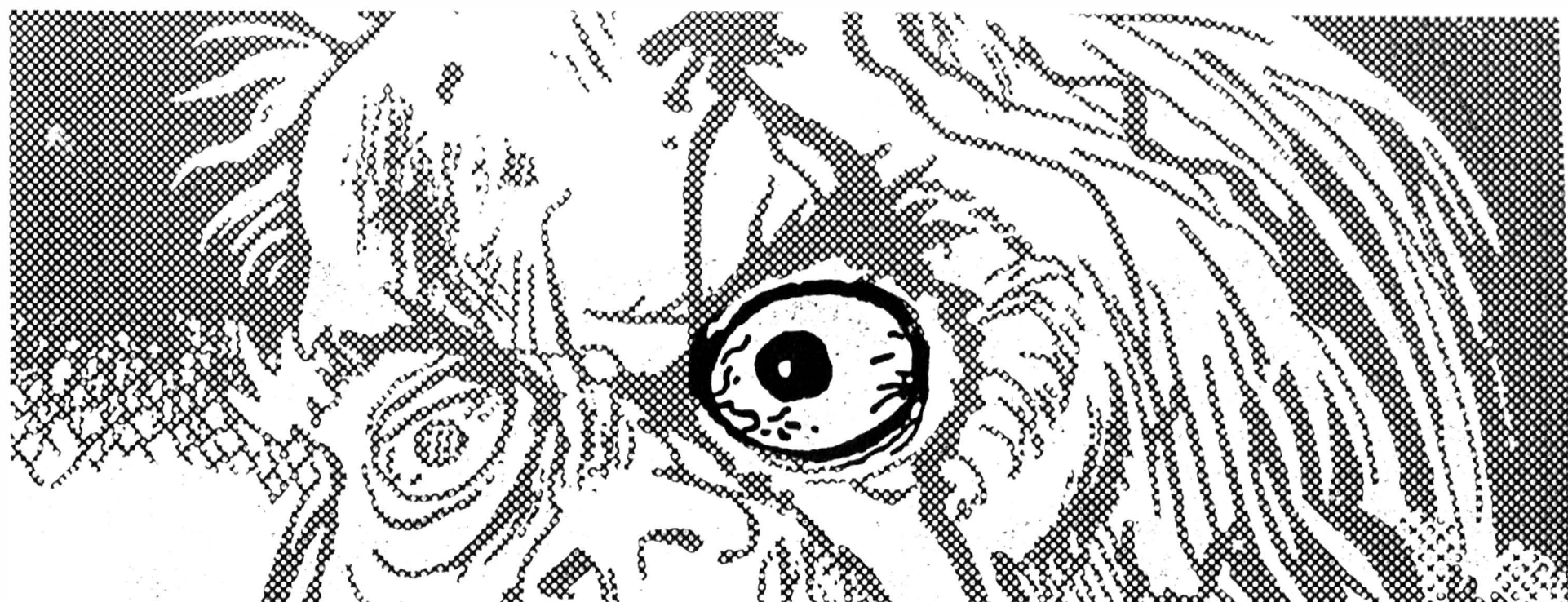
Walker waved aside the congratulations from Hunzeker and Jeffers. Muldoon even asked if Walker wanted a place on the police force. The Immortal Corpse, satisfied for the moment with the outcome, left for his apartment. No one tried to detain him.

The final word was had by H. Cully Jeffers, while shaking hands with Beardsley Hunzeker before leaving for home.

"Beardsley, you were right, absolutely right. Walker is unquestionably a master of disguise. I never saw anything like that performance of his in your office before—not in my life!"

"No, Cully," Hunzeker said, trembling. "*You* were right. I agree now that Walker *is* a warlock. I just thank God he's on *our* side."

He shuddered as he closed and locked the museum door.



THE END



# B R E A K D O W N S

WHAT DIRECTION(S)  
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE  
THE GRAPHIC STORY  
TAKE?

**Guy H. Lillian III:** Since the beginning of the Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams *Green Lantern-Green Arrow* series, the relationship of the graphic story to the Real World has tightened considerably, usually with naïve and trivial results. Writers have embraced weak causes, silly slogans ... with the only significant exceptions in my mind being the work of O'Neil and Elliot Maggin in *GL-GA* itself. Personally, I find "relevant" stories, when well-done, sensitive to the subtleties of the Real World, not "preachy" or sensational, to be fine comics work. I'd love to see more of the same. Unfortunately, all we'll probably be seeing in months ahead, since *GL-GA* is no more, will be more re-hashes (ahem) of the drug business opened up by Deadman and *GL-GA*, hysterically and unrealistically presented. Such stories are horrible and should never be written.

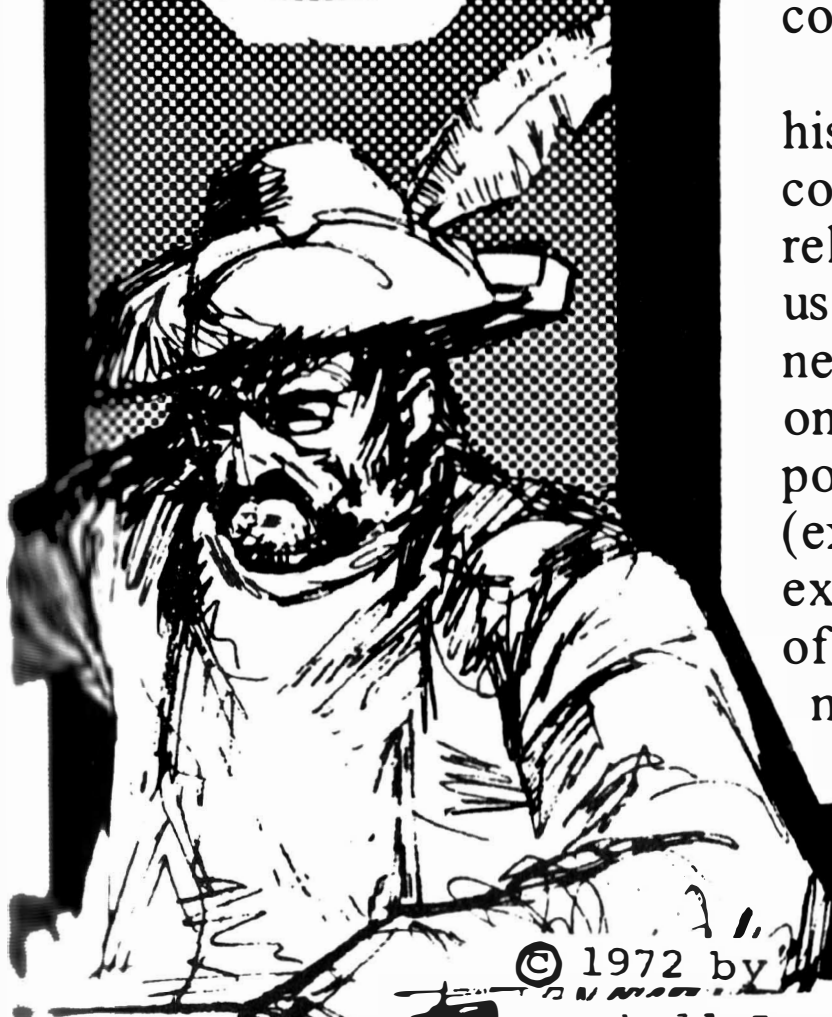
Nevertheless, there's the first thing I like: sincere relevance to the Real World.

Characterization is a new thing in comics, and I like it when it is subtle, again not preachy, and helps to define a characters. Writers like O'Neil have learned that the personalities of a person like Oliver queen can best be shown through action, artwork, the basics of the comic book medium, rather than talk. Most writers, alas, haven't learned that yet. When they do ... all the better. As examples of good characters I turn to the obvious: Deadman, Hans von Hammer, Queen, and in a smaller way, Hal Jordan. I don't include the Kirby population in this, because a third item is coming up and I'm saving them.

The third item is *myth*. Kirby shows in his books the power a mythic creation can convey. His zines are without specific relevance to earth as it is, but the epic tells us things about our earth and our race nevertheless. It is powerful and effective as only myths can be. Little original use of the power of myth has been made in comics (excluding super-hero types like Thor) except for Jack's stuff, and I think creativity of such a scope is a good thing for the medium. I hope other artists of talent take it up.

**Rick Norwood:** What direction should the graphic story take? The direction it is taking: one man doing writing, pencils, inks, color, and then overseeing the printing to make sure that is done right. The old comic-book-as-an-editor's-medium was always pure crap. Even the "good" editors have done more harm than good. The story comes first, and in the graphic story it comes as a series of images, not words. If these images are first turned into words, filtered through an editor, then imperfectly realized by an artist who is not dealing with his own ideas but translating something third-hand, it is bound to be third-rate. Writers should write prose. Artists should stick to art. The graphic story belongs to the rare writer/artist: Bode, Sheldon, Kirby (God, I wish he would do his own inks!), a handful of others. The real shame is that writer/artists like Hal Foster and Neal Adams turn out hopelessly inferior work by letting someone else do their writing or their art. Charles Schulz has the right idea. Do it *all* yourself.

**Fred Patten:** You ask what direction I think comic art should take? Hmm. Artistically or practically? They're unfortunately not the same thing. The pros themselves are trying radical experiments today, such as Kane's *Blackmark*, without too much success. Yet *why* were Kane's *Savage* and *Blackmark* failures? About a month after the latter came out, a foreign fan asked me if I could get him a copy. Most of the bookstores in Los Angeles that had had it told me they were sold out. Not that they had sent them back; they were sold out. Yet the title was reportedly considered a failure because hardly anyone bought it. The answer, of course, is that it sold out at the stores that got it but so many copies were undistributed that the publishers was apparently getting buried under heaps of returns at the same time that fans were writing to friends in other cities asking if they could find copies. Apparently





## BUSTER CRABBE as Flash



the same happened with Marvel's *Savage Tales*. It's distribution.

Ask almost any magazine publisher and he'll tell you that distribution has gotten worse in this country in the last twenty years and is continuing to deteriorate. No comic art experiment can succeed, no new direction can be taken, if the publishers can't get their product where people can buy it. The only practical answer for those like Kane and Kirby who're willing to put some work into keeping the medium alive may be to stop trying to think of new ways to package the product and start a new, efficient distribution company.

The direction that I'd *like* to see comic art take is that already taken by European comics. After serialization in a

regular periodical, the good stories are then reprinted in full-color albums. Anyone who's seen one of the *Tintin* or *Asterix* books knows what I mean. 48 to 64 pages of story, no advertising, in bright color on good quality paper, in sturdy paperback or hard-cover binding that'll last for years. Many of the popular books have been reprinted five or ten times; you can buy comics in France that were written in the 1940's that have hardly ever been out of print since. New fans can buy them at any time. If a new American fan wants to get a famous comic book, where can he go? Try to locate the yellowing, battered old issues of the original printing in used-magazine shops, or order from a specialty book-dealer for a big rare-book price; that's all. Can you imagine a *Tintin*-format collection of the whole *Deadman* series in one or two volumes? Or the recent *GL-GA* drug story? Or of Walt Kelly's old unreprinted Pogo comic-book work? Or maybe a Steranko or Wally Wood sampler? But I don't think this *will* be the direction that comic art will go in this country, because attempts have already been made to introduce the *Tintin* and *Asterix* series commercially and they failed miserably. Due to production costs, the books have had to be sold at \$3.00 a piece. You or I might be willing to pay \$3 or \$6 for a one- or two-volume quality printing of the whole *Deadman* series, but your average comic-buying kid is already priced out of that market, and your average book-buying adult will just laugh at the idea of being asked to pay that much for "just a comic book," no matter its quality or the quality of its presentation.

So I'm pessimistic. Frankly, I expect higher prices and more reprints, as the publishers try to hold down costs and still keep comics cheap enough that kids will buy them. And, eventually, they may no longer be able to do that. We'll still have the fan projects like Nostalgia Press that will be able to bring out special editions of the best of the great artists, but we'll all be living in the past. There may be no future.

**Mike Barrier:** The graphic story is already taking directions I like, in the work of people like Corben and Shelton, and others among the underground cartoonists; that is, away from the banalities—and, lately, the insufferable

## "Sweet Adelaine"

by

Frank  
Frazetta





self-righteousness—of the commercial comic books, and toward a much fuller use of the medium.

**Ronn Foss:** To survive as we know it, I believe that comic strips will *have* to become more relevant to actual life. There have been isolated incidents recently, in DC comics notably, touching on social commentary, racism, ecology, and other real-life concerns, but they've barely scratched the proverbial surface.

Of course, "heavy" stuff like the drug scene must be soft-peddled, as in the *GL-GA* award-winning story, since an overdose of education can turn readers off as easily as on. Personally, I'd like to see more emphasis on the crimes of big business profiteering (for example, utility companies' pollution, then telling the public *we* must pay *more* to clean it up) and governmental waste/rip-offs, but this too would be merely mentioned in passing by the established characters.

I believe that conditions are slowly improving, in regards to relevancy in comics, but as with newspapers and T.V., motion pictures and novels still show the way. Something akin to "All in the Family" should be done in a comic book.

I would like to see graphic stories unchained from their formula that has been worked and re-worked since their birth. I feel much (not necessarily *most*) of the world is "coming of age," after lo these many generations, and the comics must do this also if they are to be with us tomorrow.

**Jan S. Strnad:** I'd like to see the graphic story go in any direction talented people want to take it. For myself, I'd appreciate seeing more stories like Richard Corben's *Rowlf* and George Metzger's *Moondog*—complete in themselves, combining characters, plot, and theme into stories that begin and end. I'm also impressed right now with the work of F. Schrier and Dave Sheridan as seen in *Mother's Oats*; it's the most original, creative, and imaginative stuff on the market. I'd like to see publishers like Warren putting out titles slanted toward the seventeen-plus age group and devoted to adaptations of good text stories, especially in the science fiction line. It would also be great to see magazines



printing top-notch comic stories like *Playboy* prints top-notch text stories. And finally, I'd like to see extensive use of comic books in schools, teaching children how to read and making them *want* to read.

**Chuck Robinson II:** I would like to see this medium be utilized for the graphic novel. I have long toyed with the idea myself, but no one artist seems willing to undertake so monumental a task, and admittedly, I've put off the task myself. Comics could and should be restored to their 64 page glory, at whatever the price. But the novelty of the idea is lost if the powers that be do as they have in the past and divide the page count among an untold number of brief tales, the very brevity of which often kills any real *creative* potential, and sometimes the entertainment value as well. The graphic novel ... can you imagine an adaptation of a complete Conan novel? Or John Carter? Sixty to a hundred pages is a lot of room, and all the various plot twists, sub-







plots, and sidetrips of an actual novel could indeed be worked in. If not adaptations, then imagine what great things can be done with a bit of originality and all that room to work with.

In my opinion, the graphic novel is one of the prime, if not the vital step ... if idealistic and creative people in our medium are to achieve their ultimate goals and have the talent in our endeavors recognized and eventually to have the medium itself accepted as a legitimate art form.

**Gordon Matthews:** Well, really, there are infinite possibilities—*anything* legitimate. Basically, what's needed is for comics writers to realize that the graphic story is a separate art form. I don't think any of the pro writers except maybe O'Neil have any idea of what they're doing, let alone what they should be *trying* to do. The most *elementary* thing is to concentrate on showing the events instead of talking about them.

Then, if and when that is set straight, some legitimate story lines are needed. I don't want to read the same old stories about super heroes fighting villains, and I don't want to read propaganda, right or left. I want to see comics that deal with the human condition, or a realistic study of a normal person put in an abnormal situation (like the old Ditko *Spider-Man*), or a realistic study of an abnormal person. I want to see some approximation of credibility. In other words, literature. Why not? I know there are fans who believe that comics should never go beyond escape, but really isn't that ridiculous? The graphic story is, conceptually, an art form as legitimate as any other, and if writers and fans are able to see it as such, it may finally get somewhere.

Probably the big problem with comics, even outside of being forced to cater to bubblegumsters, is that it's such a closed field; mostly, I guess, because stable writers are needed to hold down the monthly schedules. I'd like to see five or six

dollar-sized comics published bi-annually or annually. This would open the field to all writers, just as all the other art forms are open to all artists. With an open field, the comics format could start to produce true geniuses.

I like George Metzger's work. I'd like to see a lot of experimentation. Comics are almost unlimited in their potentialities, and the surface as hardly been scratched.

**Bill Schelly:** I agree with Gordon when he implies that it's not "what you do" but "how you do it" that ultimately makes or breaks a comic strip. Take a look at all the great strips of the past. The Spirit? When Eisner left the strip during the war, the artists who took over couldn't maintain the quality, and it gradually sank to a banal, commonplace level. Same characters, same basic premise—*different approach*. The approach made all the difference in the world. What distinguished the Kurtzman war books (*Frontline Combat*, *Two-Fisted Tales*) from all the rest? Chiefly, Kurtzman's deft handling of the graphic medium—in which case, I would take issue with Rick Norwood's comment that "even good editors have done more harm than good."

I would like to see more emphasis on the visuals, as in (again) *Green Lantern-Green Arrow*, without the superfluous prose of a Gerry Conway. One of the worst offenders in this respect was Gardner Fox, whose DC stories of a few years back were heavily laden with thick, usually unnecessary captions.

Among the pro companies, DC is doing some genuinely exciting things, notably their ERB books—and they're all-new material. They really seem to be encouraging a measure of originality, creativity. They are the ones I'll be watching.

-end-



# PROJECT:

# WILL EISNER

This is an article on one of the most famous comic book artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: William E. Eisner. In fact, it is more an article on an era than just one man's works, for to tell about Will Eisner one must tell a little about many other artists and writers who worked for him and his associates.

Why did Tom and I tackle such a mammoth research project? Well, I for one never expected to take on anything like this. All the article work I've done up till now has been on comic books and characters, never on the comic book career of one man. At the time I was asked to do this, I owned just three stories by Will Eisner: two in *Police Comics* and one in an issue of Harvey Kurtzman's *Help! Magazine*. Now I admit that, while no stranger to *The Spirit*, Will Eisner was just a name of an artist to me. A good artist, true.

I had first seen *The Spirit* in 1949. At that time, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania had three daily newspapers: *The Post Gazette*, *The Sun Telegraph* and *The Press*. The last two also printed Sunday editions, with *The Press* carrying mostly NEA and United Feature comics like "L'il Abner," "Capt. Easy," and "Out Our Way", and the *Telegraph* had "Prince Valiant," "Blondie," "Flash Gordon," etc.

Then, in the late 1940s, *The Post Gazette* also started a Sunday edition that was to last into 1951. (*The Pittsburgh Press* was the only paper to survive.) And one of the strips the *PG* carried was *The Spirit* Comic Section. For about three weeks, *The Spirit* supplement appeared comic book size, but with the fourth week it was enlarged to full tabloid proportions (11" x 15") and remained that size until the Sunday paper folded.

Even then I appreciated good art, so I kept all those *Spirit* sections and still had them as late as 1960 when I first discovered comic fandom. But, for some unknown reason, I traded them all away for Golden Age comics.

This could have been the end of my interest in *The Spirit* and Will Eisner—and for a time it was—but my interest was temporarily renewed when the February 1962 issue of *Help!* (Vol. 2, #1) came out, for this issue carried eight pages devoted to Eisner and his creation: slightly over one-fourth page of text and seven pages of *The Spirit* in a story called "Sand Saref." But I really wasn't interested in collecting *The Spirit* as I was after the likes of *Batman* and *Captain America*.

In April 1966, Thomas F. Fisher and I started to correspond, discussing the usual things for two collectors: comics, old and new. Then Harvey released their first reprint issue of *The Spirit* and Tom was hooked. He was wild about *The Spirit* and Eisner, and by the time the second (and last) issue came out, he was a confirmed Eisner fan. He then purchased Ed April's *Spirit Dailies* reprint book, and the raves from him were such that I had to do the same to see what it was all about. I must tell you this: any Eisner fan, any *Spirit* fan... any comic fan who missed that reprint of the first ninety-three *Spirit* daily strips has missed a gem.

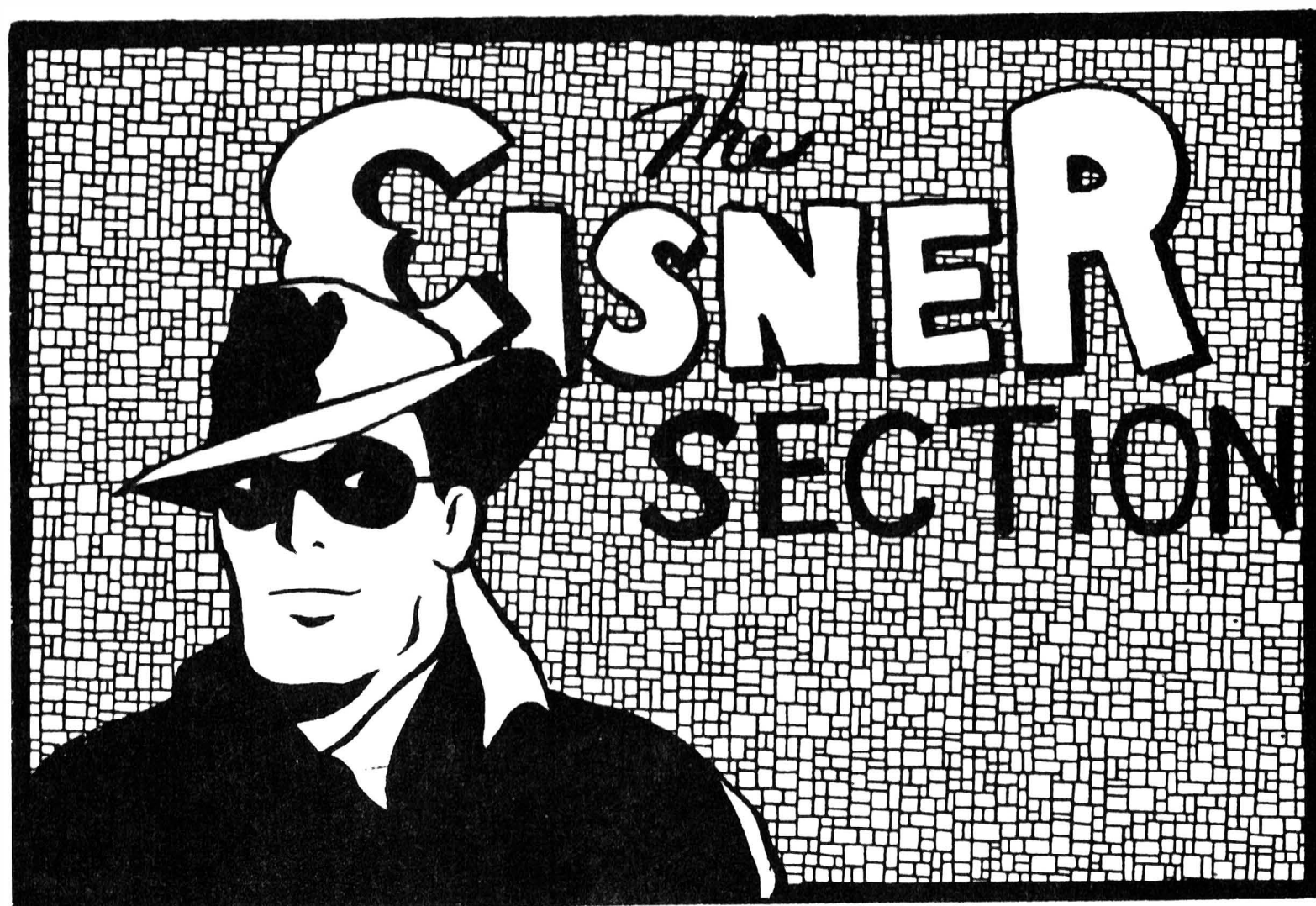
Tom and I had wanted to work together for some time, so he finally popped the question: Would I do an

article on Eisner? I replied yes, and January 1967 "Project: Will Eisner" began in earnest.

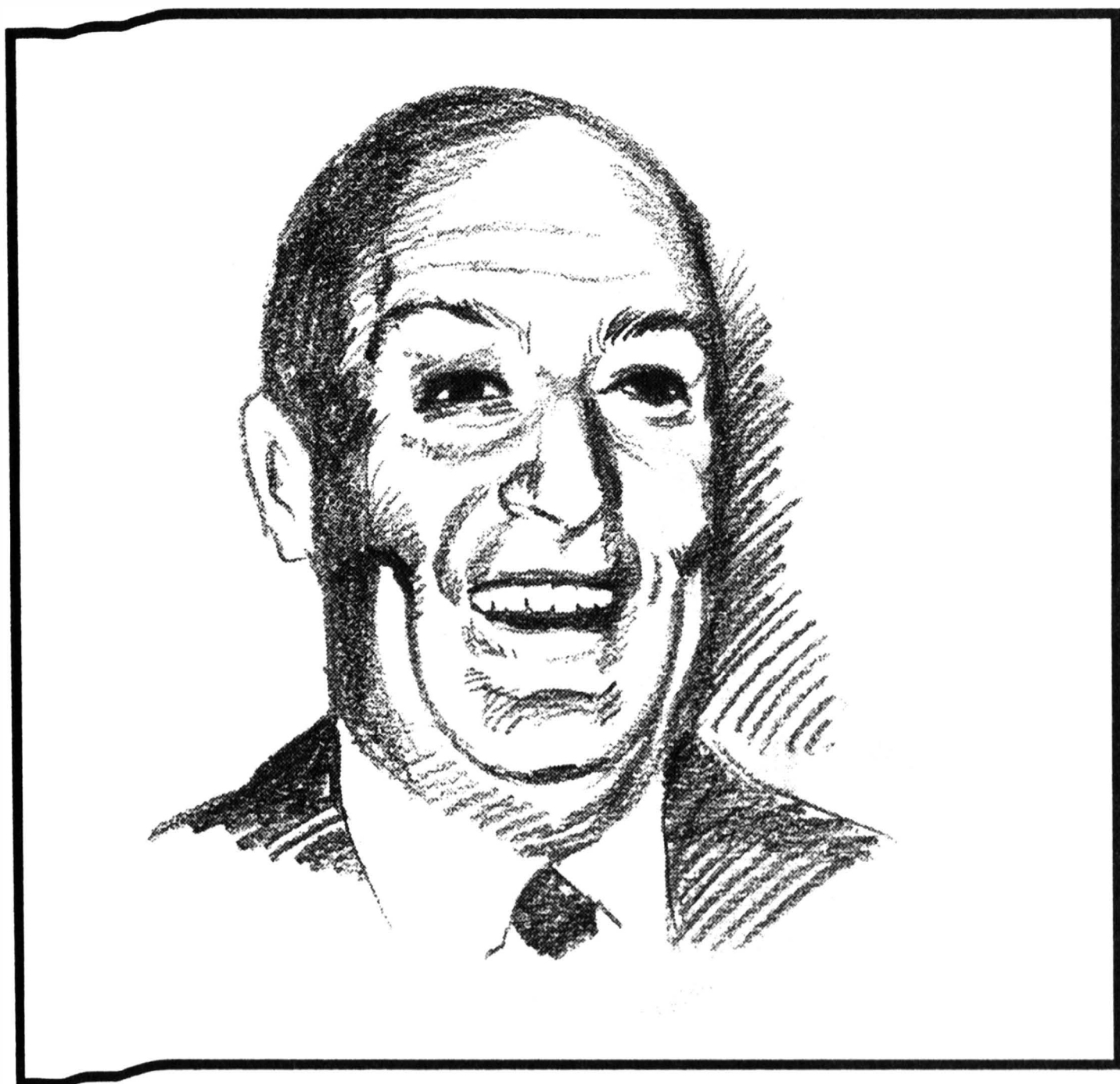
What little information I had was added to what Tom had, and I discovered he had a bit more than I. On Sunday, January 9, 1966, an article on Eisner and *The Spirit* written by Marilyn Mercer, a former secretary to Eisner, appeared in the magazine section of the *New York Herald Tribune*. The story was entitled "The Only real Middle-Class Crimefighter." This same article included five pages of *The Spirit* with all new Eisner art, his first since 1951, which only added to our enthusiasm.

We knew there would be a lot of problems. How could we find the addresses of certain artists now, including Eisner himself—and then, would they help out? As you can see in the following pages, we had, for the most part, very good luck in that area. If not for the kind help given us by both Mr. Eisner and those who worked with him, as well as the fine assistance of the many Eisner devotees across the country, this article would never have made it in print. I only hope in the end that you enjoy reading it as much as we did researching and writing it.

R.L.M.







# EISNER: A MAN & HIS WORK

by  
**Raymond Miller**  
and  
**Thomas F. Fisher**

*Will Eisner sketch by Schelly*

In *Comic Art* #4, Hal Lynch and Vernell Coriell, in their memorable story, “Minute Movies,” the story of Ed Wheelan, wrote that Mr. Wheelan is truly the “D. W. Griffith of the Comics.” He introduced the straight drawing and serious continuity to comics that got them out of the one strip punch line and into continuing stories. This, in turn, led to the story-telling adventures of Dick Tracy, Prince Valiant and the rest. Yes, Ed Wheelan was the D. W. Griffith of the comic strip, and, almost twenty years later—in 1936—we find a new “Griffith”—this time William E. Eisner. Just as Wheelan got the newspaper *strip* out of a rut, so did Eisner for the comic *book*. Eisner introduced the first original stories especially made for comic books. Up till 1936 the only thing comic books carried were reprints of newspaper strips, but Will Eisner was soon to change the history of the comic book publishing business, and at a very young age of about nineteen.

I noted after re-reading the story of Ed Wheelan’s life that he introduced continuity in his “Midget Movies” strip (the forerunner of “Minute Movies”) in 1917, the same year Will Eisner was born. Thus, there were two outstanding events for the world of graphic art in one year.

Will Eisner was born during World War one in New York City in the year 1917. His father was a Seventh Avenue manufacturer, and Will spent his early childhood days around that part of New York, never dreaming that one day he would rank near the top of the list of twentieth century cartoonists. Even at the young age of seven he had thoughts of becoming an artist, but his days spent at DeWitt Clinton High School aimed him toward a career as a stage designer. But the cartoonist in him was stronger, and he ended up studying art at DeWitt. (Anyone who has ever read *The Spirit* can see that Will mixed stage designing with cartooning because his stories and lay-outs are so carefully staged.)

After he finished school, he went to work as a writer-cartoonist in the advertising department of *The New York American*. Will says his reason for going to work for *The American* was starvation. Assuming he was eighteen or nineteen years old when he graduated from high school, the year he went to work for *The American* must have been around 1935 or 1936.

## Eisner’s First Strip...?

The earliest Eisner strip we have encountered appeared in *Wow, What A Magazine* #2, August 1936, published by Henle Publishers of Jersey City, New Jersey. Since this was 1936, Will could have been no more than nineteen years of age at this time. He did the cover of this comic, and two inside strips. There are no copyrights on the material, and all of his work is signed by his real name. *This was new material, done originally for this comic.* Therefore, it looks as if his claim that he was the founder of original comic strips for the comic books is true. His first strip in this book is entitled “The Flame,” which was printed black and white and ran only two pages. Canadian collector/dealer Ken Mitchell notes that Will used most effective Ben-Day screens (a la Milton Caniff of the same period) in the strip. The second (and superior strip, Ken notes) was called “Capt. Scott Dalton.” This—also in black and white—ran for three pages. This was set in the city, a favorite background in any Eisner strip, and later perfected in *The Spirit*.



After much checking on dates, Tom and I have come to the conclusion that these strips, then, are either reprinted strips Will originally did for *The New York American* (which is unlikely since he worked for their advertising department), a moonlighting job he was doing, or Ken Mitchell is mistaken. But considering that Eisner himself claims to be the first to do all-new strips for comic books, I can't see how Ken can be in error, so we must assume *Wow, What A Magazine* #2 to be the jumping-off point for original material. At the same time, Will was also doing one page cartoons for *Famous Funnies*.

To our knowledge, Will had no stories appear during 1937, other than “Hawks of the Seas,” which will be discussed later. Henry Steele informs us that Eisner did a story for *Circus Comics* #1, June 1938, called “Jack Hinton, the Guardsman,” which was six pages long, and another six-pager titled “Charles O’Mally,” in *Circus* #3, August of that same year. Both stories were done under the title “Complete Picture Novel.” *Circus Comics* was a Charles Lever Publication, although Bill Spicer’s *Guidebook To Comic Fandom* lists the publisher as Globe Syndicate.

In 1937, Will created his first major strip. A year later, he and Jerry Iger formed a partnership to produce original comic book material. Will told us, “There was at the time only a few comic books in the market. These depended solely on syndicated strip proofs. Since most of these had been contracted for, the new publishers (mostly pulp, who were having a bad time) wanted to get into this new field. I hit on the idea that original material would be the ‘coming thing.’ I asked Iger (who was then at liberty) to be my partner, and we went into business producing comic books.” (Note: Ken Mitchell tells us that Iger was editor of *Wow, What A Magazine*.)

Eisner observed that their comic books were a great financial success. Comic publishers were paying a flat \$5.00 per page for material and Iger and Eisner undertook the task of meeting that rate by setting up a “factory.”

“I would write and design the characters,” Will explained. “Somebody else would ink, somebody else would letter. We made \$1.50 a page net profit. I got very rich before I was 22.”

As great as the above sounds, it may be slightly exaggerated. This depends upon when the work appeared under the pseudonym “Willis Rensie.” Will didn’t say if he used this name before or after his partnership with Iger, but from what he said previously, the name Rensie must have preceded the Eisner/Iger partnership. Will continued, “Much of the stuff that appeared under the name Willis Rensie ... was done by me during a very hungry time when I could not afford a staff and I attempted to convince publishers that I had a huge stable of talented artists working for me.”

Now from that statement, the pseudonym must have preceded the partnership, since Will Said that he and Iger did have a fairly large staff by then.

## “Hawks of the Seas”

Going on this assumption, then Will's strip "Hawks of the Seas" was his first "name" strip. "Hawks of the Seas" marked its debut in *Feature Funnies* #2, Nov. 1937. This was one of Everett M. Arnold's earliest titles (his first comic title being *The Comic Magazine*, 1936).



*Above: "Hawks of the Seas" page*  
*Below: Jumbo Comics cover by Eisner*



*Continues...*



“Hawks of the Seas” was to run eleven or twelve issues in *Feature Funnies*, last appearing in #12 or 13, placing the date at September or October 1938. And if my data is correct, the very first story was simply called “The Hawk.” The rest of the *FF* stories carried the full title “Hawks of the Seas.” (After *Feature Funnies*, the strip could have appeared in a few issues of a comic called *Wags*, according to Aussie fan John Ryan. Can anyone confirm this?)

*Jumbo Comics* #1, Fiction House’s first title, saw light of day Sept. 1938, and “Hawks” appeared inside.



Uncle Sam  
Illustration by Bill Schelly

“Hawks” was set in the days of the Jolly Roger, pirates, schooners and buried treasure. The Hawk was a hard and dangerous enemy to all who would defy the laws of justice. He and his merry crew sailed the seven seas in The Lady Scarlet in search of pirates and other assorted sea-crooks.

The strip was still called “Hawks of the Seas” until *Jumbo* #7 or 8, but by the ninth issue, the title was again shortened to “The Hawk.” It is my opinion that the last Eisner Hawk story saw printed in *Jumbo* #11, because from #12 on to at least #41 the stories were a rehash of earlier adventures, pieced together by using panels from former strips, with occasional new panels by other artists mixed in with the earlier Eisner panels. Robert Webb

took over the art chores in #44 (with the exception of the few John Martin did between #45 and 51) and handled them up to near the end. Still, these stories all bore the pen name of “Willis Rensie.”

One of the earliest artists to work for Eisner and Iger Ltd. in 1938 was the late S. Robert Powell (plus another artist who Bob could not recall). Bob noted, “My desk was a piece of cardboard carton under a lamp that gave me a shock every time I touched it. I was paid \$10 a week for my services.” But he remembered that they all moved to a larger quarters about three times in 1939. Now his earnings had been upped to \$12.50 a week, and he was awarded the title “Art Director,” with some thirty artists under his direction, among them George Tuska, Bill Williams (same as Wilmer Williams, “Red Bee”), Bill Bossert and Gene Fawcette.

## Sheena

Bob Powell gave us some info on the origin of Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. To quote Mr. Powell, “When I joined the original 6’ by 8’ studio of Eisner and Iger, Mort Meskin had done a week’s work on Sheena, then quit. Will wrote the first stories and then I took over. Boy was I awful!” So, while Eisner originated Sheena, he never actually worked on the finished artwork. He handled the writing, lay-outs and breakdowns for the first few stories. Powell handled the art with the second issue on and finally the writing and lay-outs, too.

In 1939 the first of the new titles, *Smash Comics* #1, August, appeared, and would later be a part of the Quality Comics Group. This was the only title published by Everett M. Arnold, or “Busy” Arnold as his friends and employees referred to him.

In early 1940, Jerry Iger bought out Eisner’s interest in their art shop, Will tells us. Bob Powell confirmed this. Eisner then formed a partnership with Busy Arnold, who was a businessman, not a creator himself. Powell noted that he, Nick Viscardi, Chuck Mazootian, Tex Blaisdell and the late Lou Fine went with Will to the studios in Tudor City.

The new partnership of Eisner/Arnold undertook many projects: a new line of comics and The Spirit Sunday Supplements among them.

Sometime during early 1940 or late 1939, Will also originated such strips as Wonderman in *Wonderworld Comics* and K-51 Spies at War—under the name “Rensie”—also in *Wonderworld*. He created The Flame, too, and penciled the early stories with Lou Fine doing the inks.

Iger still had a large stable of artists and continued to put out art for Eisner as well as for Fiction House, Great Comics, and elsewhere.

The new partnership of Eisner/Arnold got underway in 1940 with the debut of *Crack Comics* #1, dated May 1940. This was the first title to carry the “published by Comic Magazines Inc.” by-line.

Now there were three titles: *Feature Comics* published by Comic Favorites, *Smash Comics* by E. M. Arnold, and *Crack Comics* by Comic Magazines Inc. This trio was soon joined by *National* and *Hit*, both in July 1940, and published by CMI. *National* saw the debut of a new Eisner creation in the form of Uncle Sam, perhaps his first costumed hero for Arnold. But this wasn’t his first creation for Busy Arnold, for he had created and drawn the first thirteen episodes of “Espionage, starring Black X” in *Smash* #1 through 13.

The Quality Comics Group emblem first appeared on *Smash Comics* #14, Sept. 1940, then on *Hit* #4 and *National* #4, Oct. 1940, and finally *Crack* #5 or 6. Now all art appearing in these four comics came either from Iger’s art shop or the Eisner/Arnold shop.

Going by the three-month advance dates comics carry, you can assume that the Quality emblem began appearing about June 1940, the same month Will introduced The Spirit Sunday Supplement.

## The Supplements

Will says, “At the age of 23, I conceived the idea of a comic book insert for newspapers, and, with the Register and Tribune Syndicate, launched The Spirit.” The first supplement came out Sunday, June 2, 1940. They contained three stories: The Spirit, of course, was by Will himself. Bob Powell did Mr. Mystic. The Lady Luck strips carried the name “Ford Davis,” which was a house name. The art was first by Lou Fine, then Chuck Mazootian, followed by



Nick Viscardi (whom Powell noted was one of the best draughtsmen bar done, but incredibly slow-working), and finally by Klaus Nordling.

Now let's break down this Spirit Supplement and see what made it tick. Leading off was *The Spirit*, and since this article isn't aimed at repeating origins or describing the characters in great detail, we will skip that part and go on to more unpublished data, assuming most readers are familiar with *The Spirit*.

The supplements were published, naturally, every Sunday, without a miss from June 2, 1940 to September 28, 1952. Will Eisner was the artist, writer, lay-out man, idea man—you name it—from the very first Sunday up to his induction into the Armed Forces in 1942. During this time, Tex Blaisdell (the current "Little Orphan Annie" artist) worked as a background man for Eisner. By now Bob Powell had gone freelance but was still putting forth for Arnold/Eisner. During 1940-41, Powell not only wrote some *Lady Luck* strips, but many times parts or all of *The Spirit*. He also did some of the drawing, copy and lay-out work. The following information, word for word, has been double-checked and confirmed by Alex Kotzky ("Apartment 3-G") himself: Alex both penciled and inked backgrounds in *The Spirit* (in the supplements) from October 1941 on. Then, in June of 1942, with the loss of Eisner to the military, he began to ink Lou Fine's pencils on the figures, as well as do pencil and inks on the backgrounds. They continued, in that fashion, until July 1943, when Alex entered the service. This then explains why the switch from Eisner's *Spirit* to Fine's *Spirit* was gradual and not a sharp change in style. The name of the inker who rendered Lou's pencils after Kotzky entered the service was Ruben King, son of the illustrator and writer, Alexander King.

The year 1945 is a little dim as far as artists go on *The Spirit*, but late that year saw the return of Eisner. Some believe Jack Cole and Paul Gustavsen may have had a hand in the Sunday *Spirit* at one time or another—unconfirmed, as yet.

Let's backtrack and see who did Mr. Mystic and *Lady Luck* prior to 1946, as they were vital characters to the supplement.

*Lady Luck*, a female costume heroine, dressed in green and a green



*The Spirit* is TM & © 2002 by Will Eisner.

veil, began with the first supplement. The name on the strip, "Ford Davis," as was previously mentioned, was really a house name for several artists and writers throughout 1940 and 1941. We were lucky to get a lot of answers from Klaus Nordling himself. Klaus took over *Lady Luck* in January 1942. He said, "At first I signed the work with both the house name and my own. After a few issues I dropped the house name, using only my own." Klaus doesn't recall the date of the final supplement to carry the strip, saying "I do remember, however, having her disappear (forever?) in that final story." Klaus did both his own art and scripts. "A few times, under the pressure of a deadline, I was helped with plot summaries by Harry Stein, but I'm not quite sure if that was on LL." This work by Nordling was

freelance for Arnold. Prior to that he also did freelance work for both Eisner and Iger, but not in their strips. He also believes he did most of the new LL stories for *Smash Comics*, and, when that title changed to *Lady Luck Comics*, he thinks he did all new work there, too.

From additional data we have come up with, we discovered that the Davis/Nordling signatures appeared on this strip from March 1, 1942 through April 12, 1942. (Note: Klaus says January, but since he would be working six to eight weeks in advance, his January art would first appear in March.) Nordling's name then appeared solo on LL from April 19, 1942 through March 3, 1946 when the strip was dropped. *Lady Luck* reappeared on May 5, 1946, but this time was "ghosted," and unsigned.



This ghosted version continued through November 3, 1946, when it was again dropped, this time permanently.

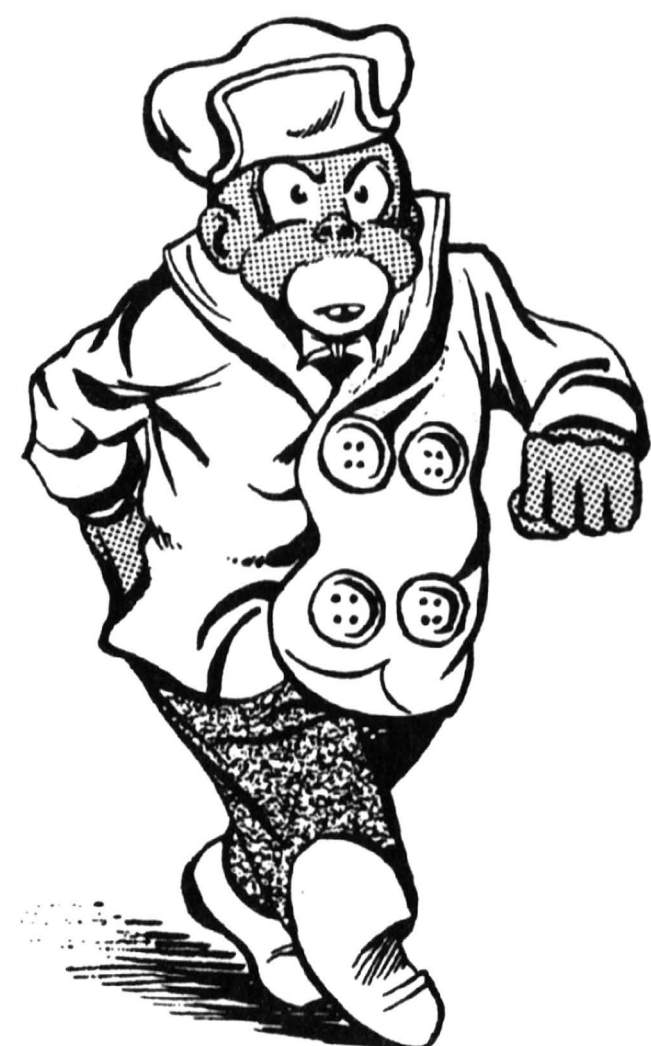
Bob Powell created and wrote his own Mr. Mystic strips, and worked on it almost up to the time he enlisted in the Air Force in August 1943. (He was released in 1945.) Again, like Nordling, Powell must have worked weeks or months again on Mr. Mystic as it was not until Oct. 10, 1943 that Fred Guardineer's name appeared on the strip. Mr. Guardineer informs us that he completed the final Mr. Mystic strip March 23, 1944, which appeared May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Fred did the entire strip himself, like Powell. And similarly, while doing this he was working freelance for Busy Arnold. The MM strip was dropped because Guardineer was going into the service and Arnold apparently couldn't find a replacement that suited him.

Fred Guardineer was inducted into the service March 25, 1944. After two years in, he returned to find that he no longer had work at Quality ... though he made out well by working on magazines put out by Bob Wood, Vin Sullivan and others.

Mr. Mystic had been replaced by "Intellectual Amos," and lastly by "Flatfoot Burns."

Looking over The Spirit Supplements, one will find that none of them had covers as such. The masthead of the newspaper always appeared at the top of the splash, which served as the cover. Busy



Arnold's copyright appeared in the first one, on an inside page initially. It continued to appear through the supplement of November 10, 1946, and then disappeared in this, the first eight-page supplement. Page numbers for each story saw the Spirit being seven pages long from June 2, 1940 to January 5, 1941, then upped to eight pages from January 12, 1941 to July 30, 1944, and back down to seven, August 6, 1946 through the end, except for the last two or three which saw The Spirit strip shrink to four pages, shortly before extinction.

All Lady Luck stories ran four pages. Mr. Mystic was five pages from June 2, 1940 through January 5, 1941, then four pages until its demise. The first full page splash for The Spirit was on August 25, 1940.

Let's take a look at Eisner's other endeavors during the war years.

Eisner/Arnold now had five titles going for them: *Feature*, *Smash*, *Crack*, *Hit* and *National*. But before 1941 was over, they added four more titles to the Quality line-up. These were *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #1 (later becoming *Blackhawk*) and *Dollman Quarterly* #1, both for Autumn of 1941, and two monthlies, *Military* and *Police*, and Will was made editor of *Military*, a post he held through the first thirteen issues. Will originated for *Military* one of his most famous and successful strips, one that even outlived The Spirit: the Blackhawks.

## Blackhawks

Eisner plotted, scripted, did breakdowns and lay-outs for the first few Blackhawk stories just as he did with Sheena two years before. He also, apparently, did the original sketches for the character. Charles Cuidera was selected for the art chores and after the first few issues took over the writing.

Busy Arnold was General Manager of Quality and therefore, since he was Will Eisner's partner, any artist under contract to Arnold would automatically come into Will's shop. Tom and I speculate that this shop lasted until 1945, run by Arnold during Will's stint in the service. (Some artists believe Jerry Iger's shop broke up in 1942.)

## Spirit Dailies

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1941, a new daily strip debuted, but the character

was already familiar to many readers: Denny Colt, detective, or The Spirit.

Eisner was able to do the dailies until 1942, when Jack Cole took over the strip. Alex Kotzky told us "Will Eisner had an art shop beginning in 1940, somewhere in New York City [the Tudor City section]. This shop did work for Arnold and for the supplements. Then, in 1942, when Will entered the Army, the shop ceased to exist, in the sense that the staff remained the same (excepting for wartime drains, of course) but that it no longer worked in one central location—some of the artists, for example, working in Stamford, Connecticut—others working at home, and so forth. Will's shop, then (as a physical location) ceased to exist when he entered the service.

In 1942, when Busy Arnold established a New York office of his own, he was able to maintain a studio of his own artists without dependence on Iger. Therefore, it seems as if the period Alex worked with Jack Cole in Stamford, Connecticut was a short one. Kotzky says that he and Lou Fine worked on The Spirit in Arnold's office in Stamford in 1942. At that time, Jack Cole lived in the same area and Alex says "we had some good times together," indicating that he and Cole were close friends. Since that is the case, then it's hard to imagine that Cole didn't get his licks in on The Spirit Supplements.

Gill Fox was Arnold's comic book editor at that time, but when he answered Uncle Sam's call in 1943, George E. Brenner took over that position. Arnold handled only the executive end.

Who wrote the scripts for The Spirit? Eisner, when he could, of course. Otherwise, they got them from freelance writers, two of the chief ones being Manly Wade Wellman and, later, Jules Feiffer.

A list of some of those who worked for Arnold/Eisner and what they did is: Jack Cole ("Plastic Man," created by Eisner/Arnold but, to the best of our knowledge, never written or drawn by Eisner, and also a character named "Midnight"), Gill Fox (covers, one page fillers, etc.), Al Bryant ("Dollman"), John Cassone, Fred Kita (*Military Comics* features), Klaus Nordling ("Lady Luck"), Bill Smith, Bob Powell ("Mr. Mystic" plus much Spirit work), and possibly Joe Kubert.



Now with Arnold and his crew back in New York, they began turning out *The Spirit* and company from there.

All of Quality's artists (including Kotzky) seem to think *The Spirit* dailies were dropped shortly after Cole stopped doing them in the summer of 1942. But we found this isn't so, and that leaves us with only one assumption: Arnold must have farmed out all *The Spirit* dailies from the time Cole dropped them to 1944, because if they had continued to be produced in Arnold's shop, then Kotzky and the rest would have seen and probably contributed to them at one time or another. The dailies did run until some time in February 1944.

## Police Comics

The last title added to the Quality line was *Police Comics*, #1 dated August 1941. #1 featured the origin of another of Eisner's most enduring creations: Plastic Man. However, since DC recently reprinted that strip, and since Eisner himself really had little to do with the strip after coming up with the idea, I will concentrate on another strip that appeared in *Police*, started with #11: *The Spirit*.

Eisner's art was to appear in issues #11 through #42, and much value is put on all *Police* and *Spirit* comics. However, after a great deal of research, we discovered that all twenty-two *Spirit* comics, and all the *Police* stories were by other artists, with the exception of *Police* #11 through #42. All the Quality and Vital Book stories were reprints of original Sunday comic sections. In *Police* #11 through #26, all *Spirit* stories were seven pages long, then from #27 through #55, they became eight pages in length. The seven page reprints resumed with *Police* #56 and all remaining issues through *Police* #102 were seven pages, also. (The *Spirit* missed appearances in *Police* #89, 91 and 92, but appeared instead in *Modern*—formerly *Military*—#83 and #102.) While most stories in *Spirit* #1 through #15 are by Lou Fine, one will find that the majority in #16 to #22 are by Jerry Grandenetti, and these are the ones with the "Eisner touch."

Will was released from the Army in the fall of 1945 and, only twenty-eight years old, was faced with mapping out the course of his future career carefully. How could he take

full advantage of the post-war period that was to follow? He could, of course, return to Quality and resume his art shop for Arnold, but, would that be to his greatest advantage? Over the three years in the military, he had learned just how powerful a tool panel art could be as a visual aid to education. During that same period, he had developed contracts with the government in this field—ones that could prove invaluable to him in the future. Furthermore, he could foresee the growth that was due to hit the field of advertising once consumer goods began rolling off the production lines once more. Was he to throw away his opportunities in both of these fields simply for the security of Arnold's Quality shop, to spend the rest of his life as a panel artist? No, Will couldn't do that.

So, late in the fall of 1945, a civilian once more, Will Eisner once again set up an art shop in New York City, this time an independent one on Wall Street. But this shop would be different than his previous shops—it wouldn't confine itself to producing comic strip material. Still, Eisner couldn't forget his *Spirit* supplements. After all, the character still belonged to him, and indeed, it had proved to be the cornerstone of his reputation. He would have to take over the *Spirit* sections once more.

## Post War Years

1945-1952

Since *The Spirit* still had a very large following, Will didn't intend to let his baby die. But how would he handle the supplements? What with his new audio-visual business, maintaining government contracts, and setting up the advertising business—not to mention organizing and running the new art factory—would he be able to find the time to do the actual *Spirit* art each week? Even if he could, would the pay be worth it? After all, Arnold's contract with the Register and Tribune Syndicate still had a year to run, and that contract was scaled to pay staff artists, not Eisner.

If he sold himself short now, would he be able to raise the ante later? No, he'd better bide his time, before actually resuming *The Spirit* art. Still, he had to do something—he couldn't just leave his beloved *Spirit* in the mess it had become over the war



years. That he couldn't bear. What to do?

Well, first of all, he could upgrade the supplements considerably while leaving the actual execution (pencils and inks) to staff artists, by resuming control of the production once more. That is, he could plot and write the strip, plus contribute lay-outs and breakdowns, without his actual art appearing on it. All he needed was a good staff artist to handle the execution. That young fellow Will picked was Jerry Grandenetti.

In a letter from Jerry, he told Tom and I that he first went to work on *The Spirit* in 1946, along with other artists. But he, apparently, doesn't consider that his true work on the feature began until 1947. The first of these new *Spirits*: January 6, 1947.

Jerry said, "From 1947 through 1951, Eisner drew most of *The Spirit* and inked some of it. I therefore inked most of *The Spirit* and drew some of it. While on the staff working on *The Spirit*, I began to work on the Dr. Drew feature." (Note: This was a strip in Fiction House's *Rangers Comics*.) "I then began to work freelance on both *The Spirit* and Dr. Drew."

During the last years (1951-1952), Jerry's job was pencils on *The Spirit*; Jules Feiffer wrote the scripts and Jim Dixon did the inks. This trio continued until Eisner was forced to farm it out to the Charles William Harvey Studio in 1952. (Note: The studio was run by Charles Stern, William Elder and Harvey Kurtzman.)

Jerry had nothing to do with Busy Arnold; he worked directly for Eisner on a freelance basis. Many of these stories Jerry worked on can be found in *Police* #94 through 101,



*Modern* #102, and Quality's *Spirit* #18 through 22. Also, the reprinted Sunday sections in the semi-recent (though undated) "Super-Reprint" appear to be from around 1947 to 1948.

With the November 10, 1946 issue, The Spirit supplements were reduced from fourteen to eight pages, with only the seven page Spirit story and a one page filler. Also, in 1946, the supplements started appearing tabloid size in some papers, one beginning in the *Philadelphia Record* on November 10, 1946. The old Sunday *Pittsburgh Press* also carried The Spirit tabloid size from 1947 to 1951. Then, on September 2, 1951, all tabs shrunk back to comic book size.

According to Jerry DeFuccio (editor of *Mad*), after Will farmed out The Spirit, Jules Feiffer used to write the scripts from an Army camp. Also, at one time The Spirit Supplements appeared in Spanish in Cuba simultaneously with the English U.S. versions.

### Wally Wood...?

Now to the question most asked. Did Wallace Wood ever work on The Spirit? While we were unable to get an answer from Wally himself, Jerry DeFuccio again helped us out. And fan Kim Weston confirmed it.

The date of the final supplement—as we know them—was July 20, 1952. However, this was not the end of The Spirit entirely, for the following week a new supplement was issued, entitled "Outer Space" featuring Denny Colt, alias The Spirit. While Kim notes that these "Outer Space" sections continued to appear through August 10, 1952, *Witzend* #6 lists September 28, 1952 as the final issue (in its excellent Eisner interview), so we must take that for a fact until corrected. These appear to be parts of a serial in which independent episodes can stand more or less alone. In this series, a scientist has a rocket which he takes to the moon, along with some convicts who had been promised a pardon if they volunteer for the expedition—sort of an early "Dirty Dozen." The Spirit is a rather reluctant recruit on the maiden voyage.

But most interesting of all is a footnote at the bottom of the first page of the first "Outer Space" supplement, for July 27, 1952. It reads, "I want to personally thank Jules Feiffer and

Wally Wood for their joining me to expand this feature into new and uncharted areas. — Will Eisner." (Italics are mine.)

Anyone who looks at Wood's work for EC—especially in *Mad*, i.e. "V-Vampires!"—will note a strong Eisner influence.

The "Outer Space" sections were credited to "Will Eisner Productions."

Since that time, it has been rumored occasionally that Eisner might leave his military panel art contracts temporarily and return to commercial comic books. For instance, in the mid-sixties, a rumor proclaimed that he was planning a new line of comics. Sadly, none of these hopes were ever realized.

His last new Spirit work that we know of was the "death" of The Spirit in *Witzend* #6, with its ominous note of finality. It's as if Eisner is telling us, "Forget it, The Spirit is dead."

There were two Harvey 25¢ editions, but they were reprints of his and Grandenetti's 1948-1950 work. Enough to whet the appetite—stir new interest—but nothing more.

Although Will Eisner and the Quality Comics Group have long since retired from the comic book business, and it looks as if Wildwood Cemetery has finally claimed Denny Colt for good, Eisner's work—thanks to the reprints and those foresighted collectors who saved the originals—will always be with us.

-end-

### Author's Note:

I would personally like to thank the following fans and pros, without whom ...

WILL EISNER  
Jerry Grandenetti  
Klaus Nordling  
John Ryan  
Ken Mitchell  
Kim Weston  
Alex Kotzky  
Henry Steele  
Jerry DeFuccio

...and dedicate this article especially to the late S. Robert Powell, for his very kind help, and great contributions to the field of the graphic arts.

## Editor's Addendum [2001]

Raymond Miller's and Tom Fisher's "Eisner: A Man and His Work" is reprinted here exactly as it originally appeared, with only a bit of punctuation changed. It's hard to believe now, but as late as 1972, the details of Eisner's career apart from The Spirit were only beginning to come together; this article, the first attempt to put all the available facts in one place, demonstrates how desperate comics fans were to learn more about the objects of their fascination—and, how imperfect their initial efforts were.

It's no criticism of Raymond and Tom to point out that we know, now, from Eisner himself, that he had no creative input into Plastic Man at all, and little or none in Blackhawk either; those were entirely originated by Jack Cole and Charles Cuidera, respectively. This doesn't lessen Eisner's importance in comics' history, or the importance of Miller's and Fisher's attempt to chronicle the man's achievements.

In fact, in *Sense of Wonder* #12 (Summer 1972), John T. Ryan contributed an "answer" to this article entitled "Eisner & Co." which filled in a lot of gaps, added much information, and corrected a number of errors in the earlier article. Taken together, the two articles represent the first really extensive research into Will Eisner's fabulous career, and I am exceedingly proud that they appeared in the pages of *Sense of Wonder*.

-- Bill Schelly

All characters depicted along with this article are TM & copyright by Will Eisner, except for Plastic Man and Blackhawk, which are TM & copyright by DC Comics, Inc. The art was done by Bill Schelly, and was mostly copied from work by Eisner and Cole.







# HORROR LIBRARY REVIEW

HORROR COMICS OF THE 1950'S (formerly the EC HORROR LIBRARY), hard-bound with dust jacket in color, 10" x 14", 200 pages, all strips in full color, \$19.95. Order from Nostalgia Press, Box 293, Franklin Square, New York, 11010.

THE ONLY REAL problem with this book is not their fault, and that is that it is not EC comics. It is a reprint of EC comics. For the fan who is interested in EC, having perhaps read SQUA TRONT, and who can not shell out the \$5 to \$25 (or more) per original comic, this book is nearly perfect. And it was probably intended for just that fan. But it isn't the same thing as EC comics.

The importance of EC comics lies in their excellence, it is true -- but particularly their excellence amid tons of mediocre, tasteless, sensational comics (though EC themselves occasionally fell into this category). ECs

were good not because they were presented in slick books with nostalgic prefaces and glorifying introductions to each story, but because they were just comic books -- and at the same time, were great comics.

I find that, as I read through the 23 stories (Wood, Elder, Davis, Krigstein, Craig, Frazetta, etc.) they pale when presented as objects of beauty and genius. On newsprint, sandwiched in with all the other comics on the stands, they were heads above the rest. But printed as they are in this book, they aren't so impressive. (The best EC work was in the SF and war books, in my opinion -- out of the province of a horror anthology.)

This is not to say that the chosen stories are bad (with a couple of exceptions). Three are quite exceptional.

"Came the Dawn" (SS #9) tells an intriguing tale of mistaken identity. The victim is a Marilyn

Monroe type, beautifully drawn by Wally Wood. (The story was later redrawn by Frazetta for the pictofictions, but never saw print.)

Second is "Whirlpool" (see below), a surreal psychological experience, written and illustrated by Johnny Craig. What sets this story apart is the advantage the colorist took of the opportunity to render stunning effects. Though the explanations for the "horrors" are a bit pat (particularly with regard to electro-shock treatment, in the light of Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest), the ending is unique, even for EC.

Third is the much-acclaimed "Master Race," chiefly important today for Krigstein's cinematic breakdowns, and Marie Severin's coloring. It carries a tremendous impact.

In addition to the strips and prefaces, E.C. HORROR COMICS OF THE 1950'S features biographies and other miscellaneous pages of interest, reprinted from the ECs.

Most of the points raised earlier are just my personal reactions to the volume, and are certainly not the fault of Nostalgia Press. However, in my copy, the color register runs haywire in a few stories. The worst is in "Saved", which I don't mind much, since it has an atrocious story and poor Williamson art, but the fact remains that the color is off in some places as much as one-fourth inch. I have not checked with other fans who own the book, but Jim Vadeboncoeur says, in GEORGE IX, the "coloring is beautiful." I guess you'll have to take your chances. You can probably get your money back if you get a book like mine. I didn't mind it too much.

In all, I would recommend this book very highly, especially if you like EC's horror line and don't want to spend over \$100 to \$200 to get these stories. Despite minor flaws, I am quite pleased with my copy, and am glad I bought it.

--- BILL SCHELLY

"If we had these horror comics from America, I think I would chuck them out. I don't think it's fair for a small child to be faced with all that perversity and sickness ... made by sick men -- mind you -- perverted men. There are certain things you protect yourself against."

--- A.S. Neill

Living at Summerhill

HEH, HEH! WELL, IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER FRIGHTENING TALE FROM THE VAULT OF HORROR! AS USUAL, I'M JUST DYING TO BEGIN, SO TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH! THE BLOOD-CURDLER I'M ABOUT TO TELL IS CERTAIN TO HAVE YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT, SHUDDERING IN ABSOLUTE TERROR! HANG ON TO YOUR NORMALITY, OR THIS ONE WILL REALLY HAVE YOU HANGING ON THE ROPE! I CALL IT...

## WHIRLPOOL



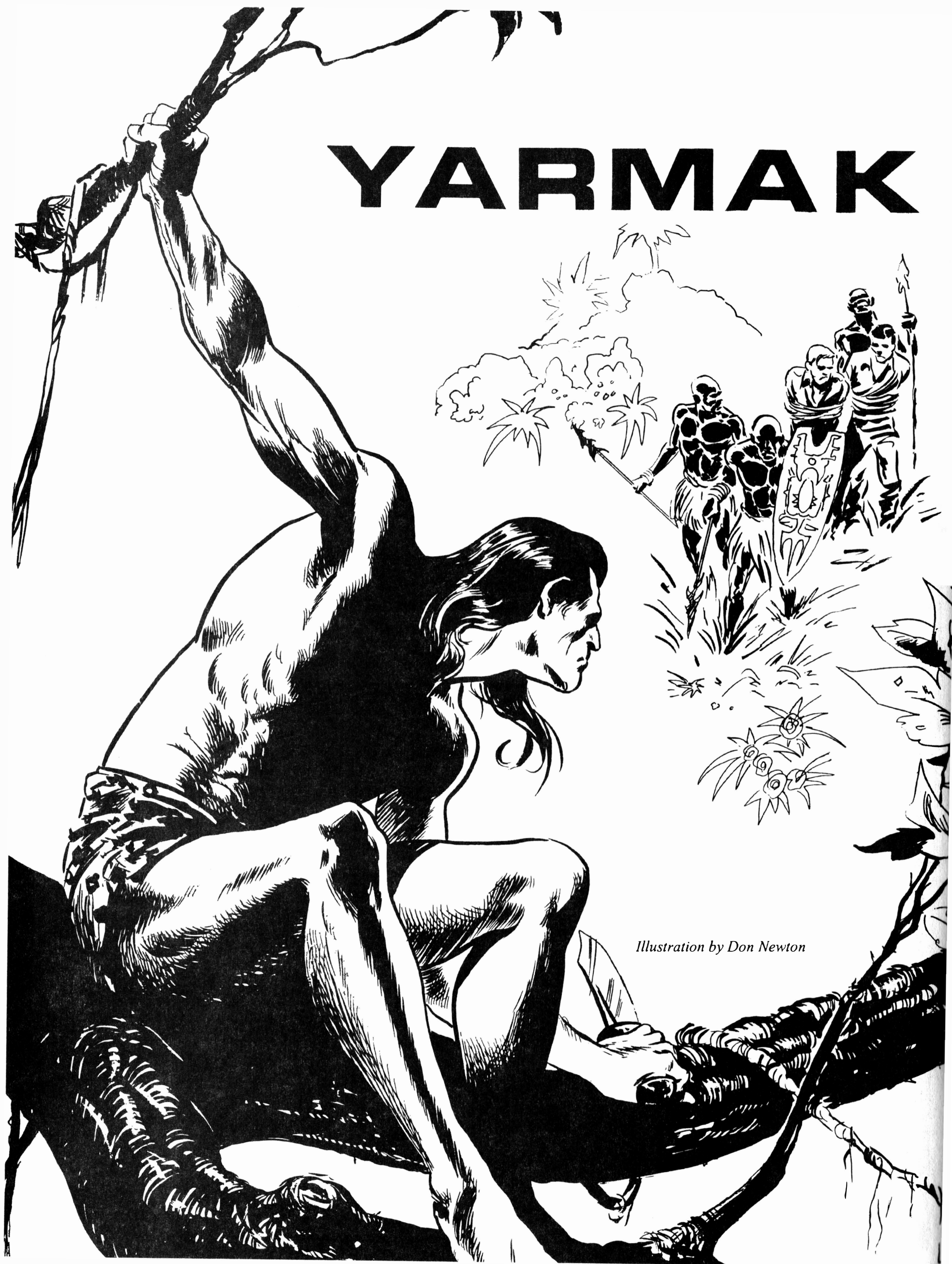
HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, DROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...



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# YARMAK



*Illustration by Don Newton*



# THE FEARLESS ONE

BY JOHN T. RYAN

It is quite common, in the world of literature, to see a popular character or formula imitated ... over and over again. "Follow the trend!"—is the cry. "Get on the bandwagon!" And no one gets onto the bandwagon quicker than publishers. As it is with Ian Fleming's James Bond, so it was with Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan. Slap a loincloth on your hero ... plant him in the jungles of some foreign continent ... let him rescue some lovely damsel in distress ... and the readers would think it was another Tarzan. Or, at least, that's the way the publishers figured it. Tarzan was the type of character that inspired imitations ... and there were imitations galore! Burroughs, no doubt, accepted this as being part of the writing game. But no matter how philosophically he may have accepted these literary imitations, he must have been astounded at the huge tribe of Jungle Kings and Queens who swung their way through a multitude of comic book pages.

Over the years, the U.S. comics industry spawned a host of such imitations: Sheena, Kaanga, Wambi, Ka-zar, Fantomah, Wild Boy, Jo-Jo, Rulah, Camilla and Jann of the Jungle are just a few of the names that spring readily to mind. Some, like Sheena and Kaanga, are remembered with a great deal of affection. Some are confined to that area of the mind where we hide those experiences best forgotten. But good ... bad ... or indifferent, they were all lineal descendants of ERB's immortal character.

Many countries outside the U.S. climbed on the "King of the Jungle"

bandwagon ... and Australia was no exception. Our foremost contribution came in the form of Yarmak, Jungle King, published by Young's Merchandising Company. There were a few other local imitations, of course, but Yarmak stood head and shoulders above them all ... as well he might, for he was seven feet tall if he was an inch!

Since Yarmak's career was spread over the late 40s and early 50s it is, perhaps, a little too early for me to become nostalgic about it. Had Yarmak invaded the comic scene some three or four years earlier (when I was at my most impressionable age, comic-wise), I have no doubt that I would be speaking about him in terms that would border on hushed reverence. For, in retrospect, Yarmak was clearly superior to the majority of comics from my impressionable period, both in story-line and art. Neither the story-line nor artwork were consistent enough to make the comic an all-time great, but both were miles ahead of most of their Australian contemporaries.

While there were over fifty issues of *Yarmak Comics*, there were, in fact, only thirty-two originals. Of this number, twenty-nine carried the *Yarmak* title and three were called *Jungle King*. After the appearance of *Jungle King* #3 in June 1952, Young's Merchandising commenced reprinting these stories, picking up their numbering sequence from the last issue of *Yarmak Comics*. For reasons best known to themselves, the first reprint (#30) did not contain the origin story. Instead, it featured "Yarmak's Desert Saga," from issue #6, and the



Yarmak

cover that was originally on issue #14! The rest of their reprints followed the same chaotic pattern and I, for one, would balk at the task of cross-indexing them. However, listed along with this article is a publishing history on all the "original" Yarmak stories.

The men responsible for Yarmak were Stanley and Reginald Pitt. Certainly the others of the Pitt production team, Wheelahan and the Ashley brothers, made their contributions, but it was the Pitts who carried the responsibility of the penciling, stories and lay-outs.

Stan Pitt was the first boy genius of the Australian comic industry. While still in his teens, he produced the finest comic art, in the classic tradition, that Australia had seen. His Silver Starr has become a byword among Australian collectors, and is eagerly sought by many fans overseas. The strip displays Pitt's great qualities in the way of fine line, proportion, composition and imaginative



draftsmanship. Even at this early age, he had reached a stage of achievement that most comic artists never reach in a lifetime. Had Pitt chosen to continue with Silver Starr, I have no doubt that it would still be running in our newspapers, as well as many overseas.

And with that kind of build-up, you'd assume that the Yarmak art was nothing short of superb? Such was not the case! The major reason was that, with the exception of part of issue #1, the only time Pitt inked his own pencils was in #24 and #25. I know, for certain, that this is something that Pitt regrets to this day. As you can see from the publishing history, the majority of the inking was done by Frank Ashley, who was a friend of the Pitt family. It was a case of sentiment winning out over common sense. Ashley was not equipped to handle Pitt's fine line ... and in some issues, came up with some extraordinary interpretations. Possibly because some issues were inked under less pressure than others, Ashley turned in a few creditable efforts, but, for the most part, he continually "lost" Pitt's fine line. In many issues, it is obvious that some wonderful pencils were "covered up."

In those days, I wasn't aware that there were such beings as inkers or that a strip was done by anyone other than the artist whose name appeared on the comic. So, you can understand the problem I had in trying to reconcile the issues inked by Ashley as being by the same artist who had produced the beautiful Silver Starr.

On the other hand, those pages or issues handled by Paul Wheelahan seemed nearer to Pitt's approach. This is understandable, as Wheelahan was of the opinion (and still is, for that matter) that Stanley Pitt was the greatest fine line artist in the comic book medium. He was following in the steps of his master, treading on hallowed ground, and it was only natural that his inking should capture a good deal of the Pitt attitude. However, while he was able to retain the flavor of Pitt's fine line, it was a long way short of the standards Pitt had set.

Jimmy (Jay) Ashley didn't become involved with *Yarmak* until the 26<sup>th</sup> issue, and remained with the comic until its ultimate demise, six issues later. While his inking was better than his brother's, it still didn't compliment Pitt's pencils.

Because Stan Pitt and Charles Young didn't see eye-to-eye on what constituted a good cover, Pitt didn't do all the covers for *Yarmak*. The illustration [adjacent] is an excellent example. As you can see, this was meant to be the cover for the first issue, but it was rejected by Young as being "too cluttered!" Personally, I consider it to be the *best* of all the *Yarmak* covers. Pitt handled the covers for issues #1 through 5, 9 through 11, 13, 14, 16 through 18, 21, 22, 24 and 25, and many of these were "doctored" to eliminate some of what were considered "superfluous details." Inside the cover of #12 ("The Pigmies of Atrix") is a full-page illustration which looks as though it was meant to be a cover. Could it be another cover that was rejected by Young?

It wasn't unusual for Pitt to introduce faces of well-known film personalities into his strip. Errol Flynn's face could be found in a number of issues. Johnny Weissmuller ... Douglas Fairbanks ... Richard Widmark ... Zachary Scott ... Sidney Greenstreet ... and many a Hollywood beauty found themselves making unexpected "guest appearances" in the pages of *Yarmak*.

Frank Ashley handled a number of the story lines, but the bulk of this work fell on the shoulders of Reg Pitt, who was also responsible for the majority of the layouts. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the stories varied, though very few would be classed as real shockers.

Both men had a wonderful feel for the language, with Reg Pitt being more inclined to the poetic and offbeat style. One of the major differences in the two men's approach seemed to be that to Ashley the story, and not the character, was the most important concern. Quite often, this delayed Yarmak's entrance, as instanced in #22 ("Yarmak Meets the Ant-Man"), he doesn't make his appearance until page 10, which is no way to treat a comic hero. On the other hand Reg Pitt, while always placing great emphasis on the story, never forgot that it was The Fearless One, himself, who was the main attraction ... and he saw to it that Yarmak was soon on the scene.

I don't know who was responsible for the story in *Yarmak* #1; perhaps it was a joint effort, as both men's names are listed in the credits. If so, both men are at fault for the

scanty coverage relating to Yarmak's origin.

This story tells of Captain Tolus Landers, a world famous explorer, who is attacked by a ferocious tiger while hunting in Africa. Just when it appears that Landers has had it, a mighty figure hurtles from the treetops. With the help of his "flashing blade," he dispatches the beast and stands before the aged hunter, who offers a gold pendant as a token of thanks. The magnificent specimen of manhood refuses the gift, saying, "I want not thy amulet, friend. Be not afraid! Many questions are reflected in thine eyes—mayhap an introduction will afford thee some peace of mind! I have lived here for two decades. My real name is no longer of consequence, for all dwellers of the jungle regard me as Yarmak, the Fearless One."

And that is precisely all you ever learn about Yarmak's origin. In #6 (April 1950), he speaks of having "lived with danger since a small boy," and, since he has lived in the jungle for two decades, it is safe to assume that he is in his middle-to-late twenties. But how did he get to be in the jungle? Was he abandoned? Were his parents killed by hostile natives, or devoured by savage animals? Where did he learn that archaic form of English? Maybe his parents were Quaker missionaries? Who can tell? Perhaps the writers felt that Tarzan's origin was so firmly entrenched in the readers' minds, precious space should not be wasted on such details.

Whatever the reasoning behind Yarmak's peculiar speech, all the "thees," "thous" and "thines" were dropped after the first issue, and a more poetic line adopted.

On binoculars: "Ah!  
And the black tusks with  
the little pools of hard water  
inside ..."

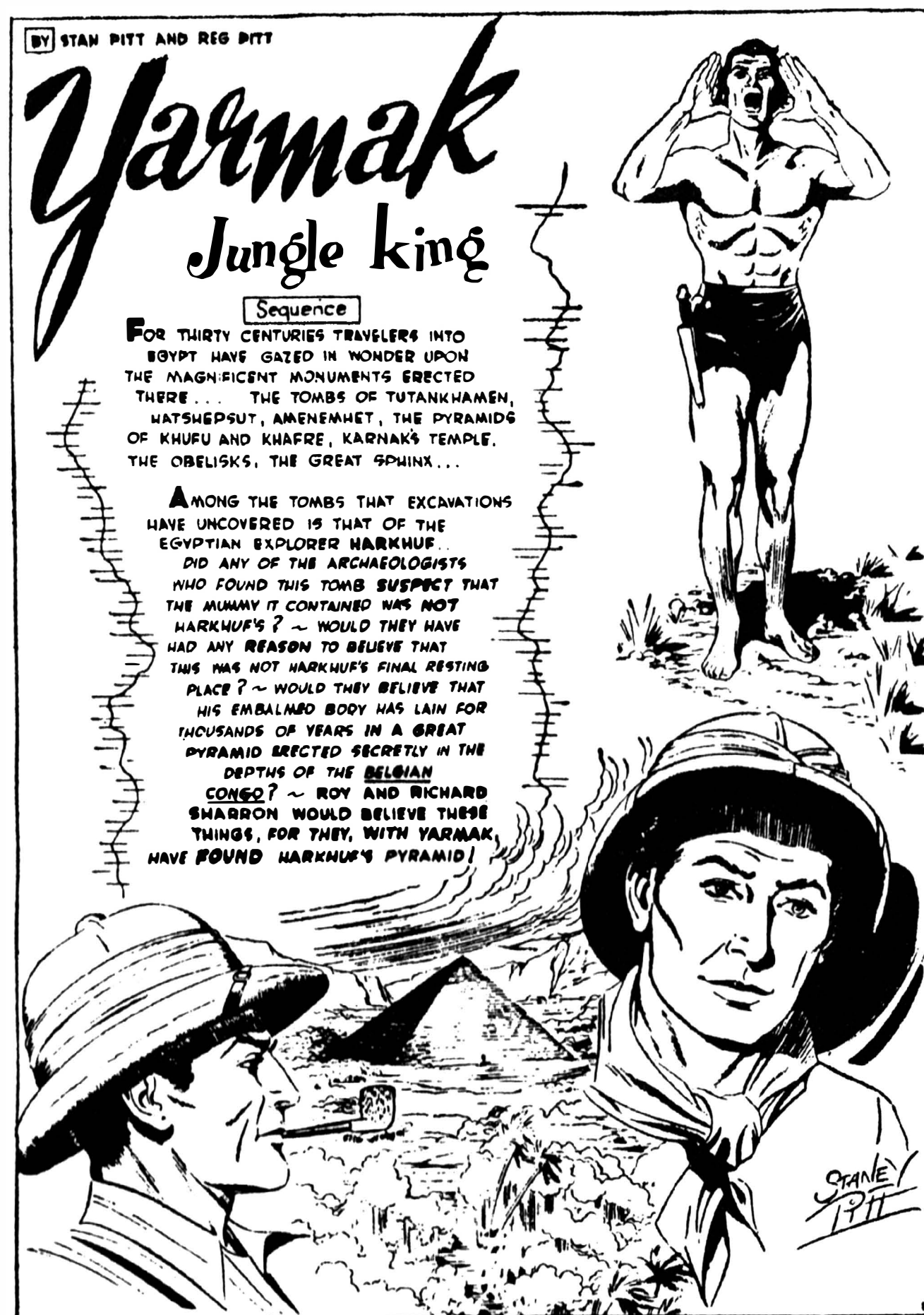
To a lion: "Ah! Fierce  
dolt! You could have  
stalked deer on this day,  
and seen the morrow ... but  
instead, you foolishly attack  
Yarmak—and expire ere  
this day has passed."

To the dead: "Pitiful  
fools you were to covet the  
previous tusks, White-ones  
... You could be alive yet,  
and happy, too, had you not  
allowed the lust for wealth  
to twist your minds so!"





● the right is the Stanley Pitt splash page to YARMAK #24, Oct. 1951.



Certainly not the run-of-the-mill dialogue to be found in most jungle-style comics, is it? And, perhaps, this is one of the reasons behind Yarmak's success, while some of the stories may have been a bit "way out," but the dialogue was imaginative.

As far as I'm concerned, the last really genuine Yarmak was *Jungle King* #2, as *Jungle King* #3 was virtually a fake. Stan Pitt had washed his hands of Yarmak and the issue in question was produced by Reg Pitt and Jimmy Ashley as something of a private venture—like, they needed the money! Reg penciled it to the best of his ability, and even resorted to tracing some of Stan's old artwork. When Reg found he was getting nowhere, he was able to talk Stan into doing a few pages to help them out. How they were ever able to convince Charles Young that the early pages were the work of Stanley Pitt is beyond my comprehension! However, there is not sufficient Stanley Pitt artwork in *Jungle King* #3 to make it a genuine Yarmak ... leastways, not for my money.

Where Tarzan did the "right thing" by Jane and married her, there

is no record of Yarmak being so gentlemanly towards his mate Zira. The lovely Zira Mandell, a titian-haired aviatrix, made her debut on page ten of #6 ("Yarmak's Desert Saga"). The Jungle King had been tricked by Murdo (an Imbani tribesman with visions of becoming "King of the Jungle") into entering the desert to search for the non-existent Lasta plant, which was supposed to hold the only cure for the ailing Imbani Chieftain. With Wa-Wa (a small monkey) as his companion, Yarmak wanders the desert for many days before collapsing in the blistering heat. Vultures waiting to feast on his almost lifeless body are dispersed by the roar of a monoplane engine. Yarmak drags himself to his feet and staggers towards the "white man's iron bird," as a lithe, feminine figure emerges from the small plane. He collapses short of the plane but is revived by Zira, and learns that she was flying to the Belgian Congo to find him! (Just why, is never explained.) Zira flies him back to his domain so he may settle the score with Murdo, which he does with a vengeance. The battle behind him,

Yarmak sends Zira away, saying, "Tis best you return to your own country, Zira. The jungle can only be a home to those who understand and love it, as I do!" She flies off, but in a short time she turns back and is met by Yarmak who welcomes her. Issue #7 ("The Ape Slave Trade") opens with Zira sharing Yarmak's tree home, and not a wedding ring in sight! It would never do for the CCA, which is perhaps another reason why I liked Yarmak.

To my mind, The Fearless One reached his peak with issues #24, 25 and 26, in 1951. This was not only because Stanley Pitt inked the first two stories, but because of the stories themselves. Reg Pitt produced a trilogy dealing with a pyramid erected by Harkuf of Elephantine:

"A great Tomb, hidden for centuries in the tangled jungles of the Belgian Congo...

"A boy, daring and ambitious, obsessed with the desire to uncover the glory of bygone ages ...

"Zulus—a primitive people born of the jungle—instinctively savage—



Yarmak Publishing History			
All issues were published by Young's Merchandising Co., and distributed by Gordon and Gotch (A/asia) Ltd.			
ISSUE	PUB. DATE	STORY TITLES	INKED BY
1	Nov. 1949	Yarmak and the Ape-Men	Stan Pitt and Frank Ashley
2	Dec. 1949	The Tombs of Icacious	Paul Wheelahan
3	Jan. 1950	The Isle of the Living Dead	Paul Wheelahan
4	Feb. 1950	In Quest of the White Gorilla	Paul Wheelahan
5	Mar. 1950	Queen of the Panthers	Frank Ashley and Paul Wheelahan
6	Apr. 1950	Domain	Frank Ashley and Paul Wheelahan
		Yarmak's Desert Saga	Paul Wheelahan
7	May 1950	The Gorilla Menace	Frank Ashley
8	June 1950	The Ape Slave Trade	Frank Ashley
9	July 1950	Yarmak's Strangest Adventure	Frank Ashley
10	Aug. 1950	The Leopard King	Frank Ashley
11	Sep. 1950	Sangeala Island	Frank Ashley
12	Oct. 1950	The Heathen Idol	Frank Ashley
13	Nov. 1950	The Pigmies of Atrix	Frank Ashley
14	Dec. 1950	The Lost Castle of Lahor	Frank Ashley
15	Jan. 1951	The River Dwellers	Frank Ashley
16	Feb. 1951	The Forbidden Land	Frank Ashley
17	Mar. 1951	Peril in Bel Hado	Frank Ashley
18	Apr. 1951	The Hidden Valley	Frank Ashley
19	May 1951	The Wizard of the Caverns	Frank Ashley
20	June 1951	Yarmak and the Yellowmen	Frank Ashley
21	July 1951	Yarmak -- Jungle Disc-Jockey	Frank Ashley
22	Aug. 1951	The Sky Phantom	Frank Ashley
23	Sep. 1951	The Goddess of Osofrod	Frank Ashley
24	Oct. 1951	Yarmak meets the Ant-Man	Frank Ashley
25	Nov. 1951	Harkuf's Pyramid	Stan Pitt
26	Dec. 1951	The Hermit and the Sphinx	Stan Pitt
27	Jan. 1952	NO TITLE	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
28	Feb. 1952	Meet Yarmak's Double	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
29	Mar. 1952	The Valley of the Moon	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
		The Hooded Horde	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
JUNGLE KING COMICS			
1	Apr. 1952	The Pit of Doom	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
2	May 1952	The Phantom Ship	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley
3	June 1952	NO TITLE (Pencilled by Stan and Reg Pitt)	Jimmy (Jay) Ashley

Yarmak checklist as it appeared in Sense of Wonder #12

oppressive—feared and hated by their Bantu kin...

“A forbidding setting and strange companion for the jungle king—as he attempts to solve the mysteries of HARKUF’S PYRAMID!”

Thus opened the most imaginative and interesting of all the Yarmak stories. The splash pages of #24 and 25 are a delight to behold, quickly setting the mood for the tale that follows. A portion of the opening story is told in an Egyptian “comic book” sequence, as is most effective. The lettering and logos, on the splash pages of these issues, were all different, designed to fit the particular story. Throughout the trilogy, even the word balloons were stylized to give an Egyptian flavor. Certainly the series would have been “complete” had Pitt

inked #26, but I guess you can’t have everything.

Like all Jungle Kings, Yarmak had the respect of the bird and animal population of the jungle. He spoke to them, and they answered. His cry of “YAR-MAR-KEE!” would echo through the jungle, and they would come to his aid. In the accepted pattern, many of these were known to Yarmak by names. There were the monkeys—Wa-Wa, Ke-tka, Waloa; the baboons—Litchica, Chet-Chet, Ornp; the apes—Dakoma, Buola, Wula; the lions—Fero, Jest; the elephants—Buala, Tondo. There was Bolko the gorilla, Sid the leopard, Gullo the crane, Algor the crocodile, Zedo the zebra, Rorga the hippopotamus, Giro the giraffe and Muvidi the hyena. Of them all, Yarmak chose Wa-Wa as his companion, and they were rare stories

when the little monkey didn’t make an appearance.

Although blessed with a great deal of wisdom and a fair proportion of animal cunning, Yarmak was an unsophisticated character. While civilization’s intrusion into his domain may have startled him, it never converted him. Guns were always “bang-sticks”—and he shunned their use. A tornado was a “vicious snake in the sky” ... gold was “glowing rock” ... a record player terrified and baffled him. In turn, he had to be instructed in the use of a wristwatch. Once, he almost throttled a man who was sucking poison from a friend’s wound. (“Aghh! I have seen the crazy Blind Bird [a bat] perform such an action, but never before have I seen a human—a *white man*—do this horrible thing. This mad man must *die!*”)

Yarmak was blessed with a beautiful physique and the strength to match, and it was responsible for getting him out of more than one ticklish situation. Apart from the normal encounters one would expect with lions, leopards, crocodiles, etc., Yarmak faced many strange creatures. At varying intervals he was confronted with flesh-eating dragons, unicorn men, gigantic bats, giant crabs, volcano lizards, fire dragons, giant ants, prehistoric animals, and a number of supernatural characters. Having conquered the likes of these, is it any wonder that mere mortals were no match for his strength?

But this wise, unsophisticated, jungle strong man belongs to the past. He and Zira are biding their time, somewhere in limboland, along with Sheena, Kaanga and the others. The Pitts are working on new comic projects. Paul Wheelahan has forsaken art to become a writer of westerns. And the Ashleys have been swallowed by the Great Unknown. I doubt if either Yarmak or the artists would like to revert to the old relationship, which is (perhaps) as it should be. Returning to the scene of former triumphs is a precarious situation at the best of times, and I would rather remember Yarmak in his days of glory, than face the prospect of a humiliating comeback. The Fearless One was created for a passage of time that is past. May he rest there, undisturbed.



"Gully Foyle is my name,  
And Terra is my nation.  
Deep Space is my dwelling place,  
The Stars my destination."

# Stan Pitt and **Gully Foyle**

**Additional information on Stanley Pitt and his attempt  
to syndicate Gully Foyle as a Sunday strip**

by John T. Ryan

One of the new comic projects mentioned in the Yarmak article was the now legendary Gully Foyle.

According to Reg Pitt, the idea of the Gully Foyle Sunday page was triggered by my mention of Stan's work in my fanzine called *Down Under*#1 (Nov. 1964). Encouraged by my presentation, Reg decided that Alfred Bester's novel, *The Stars My Destination*, would make an excellent showcase for his brother's talents. After contacting Bester and getting his permission to proceed with the strip, the Pitts busied themselves on completing a fourteen-week sequence. Mounted bromides were elaborately packaged and sent to the U.S.

However, problems that were to plague the project made their presence at the very beginning. Difficulties were encountered with the mail and correspondence and, seeing the project bogging down, I offered to act as "business manager" until such time as the project got off the ground. In April 1967, I talked the Pitts into a different method of presentation ... and one that would, virtually, pay for itself. With the help of Al Kuhfeld of Minneapolis, we had fifteen pages (fourteen pages of comic plus a cover) printed up 17" x 11" and stapled into booklets. A quantity of these booklets were set aside for distribution to the various syndicates. Additional copies were retained for the Pitts-Kuhfeld-Ryan and the balance were sold to U.S. fans at prices ranging between \$3 to \$5 per copy. I forwarded a batch of covering letters to a contact we had at The New American Library, Rosalind Wolfe, who forwarded the booklets to the syndicates nominated. This move, which saved a lot of money, confused a number of the syndicates. They could not reconcile a package bearing



*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*  
-WILLIAM BLAKE



# Gully Foyle

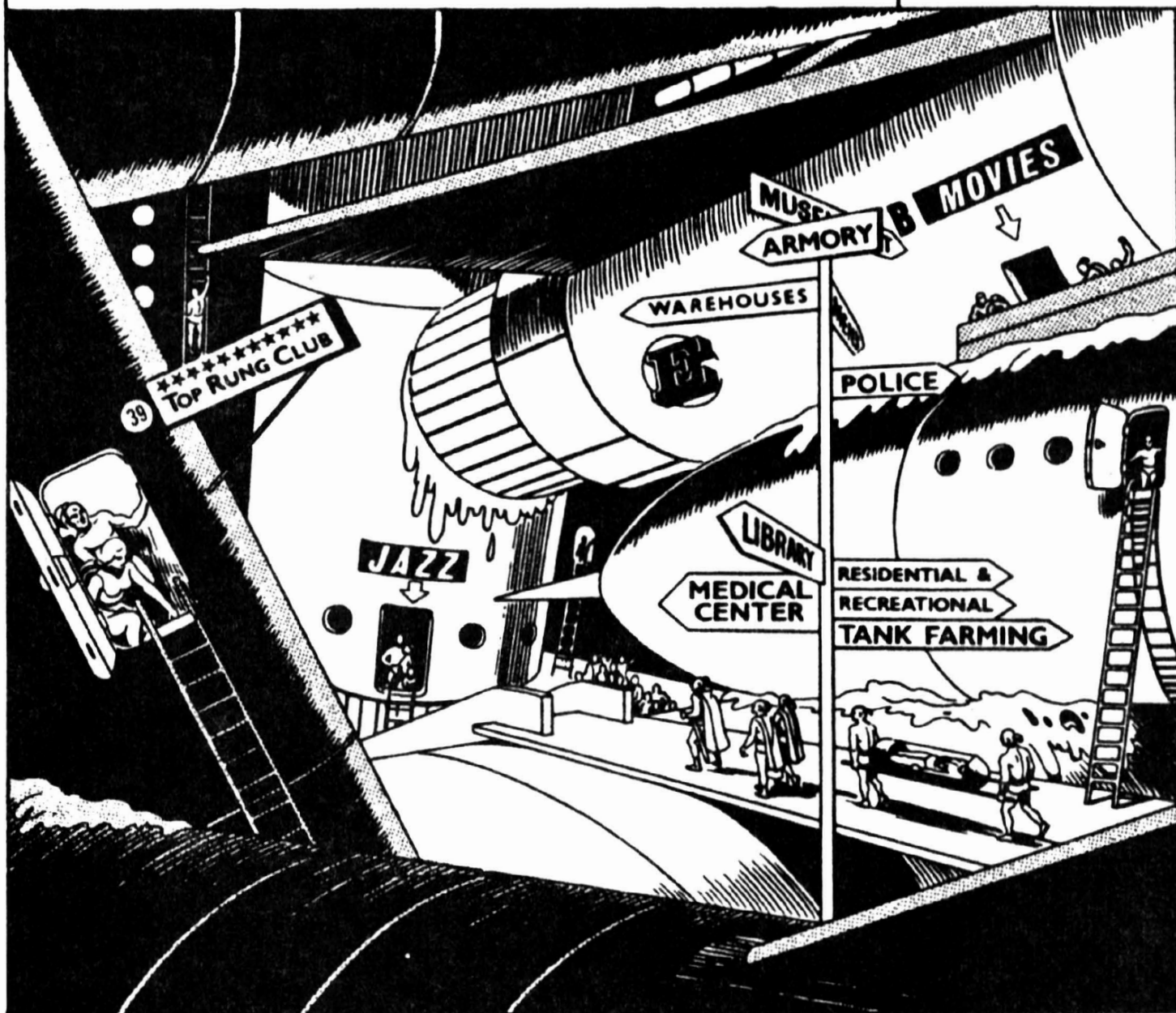
By ALFRED BESTER & STANLEY PITT ASSOCIATES

★ GULLY FOYLE HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY A RACE OF 25TH. CENTURY PRIMITIVES WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE "SCIENTIFIC" PEOPLE AND WHO LIVE ON A PLANET CONSTRUCTED OF SALVAGED SHIPS FROM SPACE.

THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH PASSED THROUGH THE GREENHOUSE OF THE SARGASSO PLANETOID, WHERE PLANTS WERE CULTIVATED FOR FRESH OXYGEN. AN OLD ORE CARRIER FORMED THE ROOM AND ONE WALL HAD BEEN ENTIRELY FITTED OUT WITH SALVAGED PORTS OF EVERY SIZE, SHAPE AND COLOR, TURNING IT INTO A VAST STAINED-GLASS WINDOW THAT WAS FOREVER AFIRE WITH LIGHT FROM THE DISTANT SUN.



GULLY FOYLE WAS CARRIED THROUGH PASSAGES THAT WERE CLUTTERED WITH SIGNS DENOTING SECTORS WITHIN THE HONEYCOMBED PLANET...



THE PROCESSION TERMINATED AT THE SARGASSO MEDICAL CENTER, WHERE THE UNCONSCIOUS CASUALTY WAS TAKEN OUT OF HIS SPACESUIT, SHAVED, BATHED AND GIVEN SHOTS OF VITAMINS AND STIMULANTS.

A STRONG-HEARTED MAN.

THE FITTEST DRIFTER YET.

AND THE MOST HANDSOME.



HE AWOKES WITH THE REACTIONS OF A CORNERED BEAST ~ STARTLED BY THE AWESOME FACE HE SAW BEFORE HIM, TERRIFIED BY THE INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE HE SAW ABOUT HIM.



HE STRUCK OUT INSTINCTIVELY, LIKE A TIGER TRAPPED AND ON THE DEFENSIVE.

Y'NOT GONNA CARVE ME UP!



Next Week:  
JOSEPH'S NEEDLEWORK



# Gully Foyle

By ALFRED BESTER & STANLEY PITT ASSOCIATES

★ MAROONED FOR 170 DAYS ABOARD THE WAR-WRECK SS NOMAD, GULLY FOYLE IS AT LAST PROMISED RESCUE WHEN SS VORGA, A SISTER SHIP OF NOMAD, ACKNOWLEDGES HIS DISTRESS SIGNALS AND DRAWS ALONGSIDE...

WHAT'S THIS?!



THE SHIP WAS ALONGSIDE IN A MOMENT, PASSING IN A SECOND, DISAPPEARING IN A THIRD...

THE SISTER HAD SPURNED HIM, THE ANGEL HAD ABANDONED HIM... HE STARED IN DISMAY.



HE LEAPED TO THE FLARE PANEL AND SLAPPED BUTTONS WILDLY. DISTRESS SIGNALS, LANDING, TAKEOFF AND QUARANTINE FLARES BURST FROM THE HULL OF THE NOMAD IN A MADNESS OF WHITE, RED AND GREEN LIGHT, PULSING, PLEADING... AND VORGA T.1339 PASSED SILENTLY, IMPLACABLY, STERN JETS FLARING AS IT ACCELERATED ON ITS SUNWARD COURSE AWAY.



YOU PASS ME BY. YOU LET ME DIE, VORGA...VORGA T.1339. NO, I GET OUT OF HERE, ME. I FOLLOW YOU, VORGA. I FIND YOU, VORGA. I PAY YOU BACK, VORGA. I KILL YOU, VORGA!



THE ACID OF FURY RAN THROUGH HIM, EATING AWAY THE DULL PATIENCE AND SLUGGISHNESS THAT HAD MADE A CIPHER OF GULLY FOYLE, PRECIPITATING A CHAIN OF REACTIONS THAT WOULD MAKE AN INFERNAL MACHINE OF GULLY FOYLE ~ HE WAS DEDICATED.

SO, IN FIVE SECONDS, HE WAS BORN, HE LIVED AND HE DIED. AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF EXISTENCE AND SIX MONTHS OF TORTURE, GULLY FOYLE, THE STEREOTYPE COMMON MAN, WAS NO MORE. THE KEY TURNED IN THE LOCK OF HIS PSYCHE AND THE DOOR WAS OPENED WIDE. WHAT EMERGED EXPUNGED THE COMMON MAN FOREVER.



Next Week:  
THROUGH  
A GLASS,  
DARKLY...



Secret Agent Corrigan by Archie Goodwin and Stanley Pitt



U.S. stamps and postmark ... but containing a letter from Australia.

From the beginning, it was obvious that the tabloid-size format would not be acceptable to the syndicates. Initially, I had trouble convincing Reg on this score ... but as the results flowed in, he realized that the format would have to be altered. It is interesting to note that, when first drawn, the early pages of Gully Foyle were virtually in the accepted full/half/tab flexible format. However, Reg felt that this formula was too restrictive of Stan's talents and switched to the tabloid-cum-comic book page format.

What did the syndicate think of Gully Foyle?

United Feature Syndicate: "The strip, of course, is beautifully drawn, but the continuity is rather confusing, with flashbacks, dreams, alter-ego, etc. We feel that this would be better suited to the comic books where the reader gets more material for study and appreciation."

Ed Grade of the *Los Angeles Times*: "Gully Foyle is very impressive. The art, especially, is superior. However, because of its unusual format, I believe it is unsuited for syndication in this country without a major overhaul, which would entail almost complete re-drawing."

Robert Molyneux of NEA wrote of the problems of selling a Sunday-only continuity but was, obviously, attracted to Gully Foyle. He wrote, "However, in the samples you sent the artwork is downright arresting and the story is interesting, and I'd like to pursue the matter one step further. I gather that no daily strip is contemplated. Is this correct?"

Sylvan Byck, King Features Syndicate, saw the strip as being in the same general field as "Flash Gordon" and "Brick Bradford"—consequently, there was no room in their stable for a third feature of that nature.

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions as to our reactions to the

various comments—except to say that, despite Byck's stature in the field, the comparison between Gully Foyle and Flash Gordon/Brick Bradford of 1967 was a bit hard to swallow. That's taking generalizations *too* far!

I was about to follow-up with NEA when we heard from John Higgins of the Ledger Syndicate. While pointing out that there were many problems involved, Higgins recognized the potential of the strip. Dozens of letters flowed back and forth across the Pacific Ocean ... sometimes quickly, sometimes after agonizing delays.

Passing over the many obstacles and problems encountered in the months that followed, by November 1968 the Pitts were well on the way to completing the "buffer-stock" of 26 pages required by Ledger. During this period, I had been working out percentages, etc. with Robert Mills, Alfred Bester's agent. When the Ledger Syndicate cabled for copies of our contracts, late in November 1968, I wrote to Bob Mills about the urgency of the situation. His reply sounded the death knell to Gully Foyle. Apparently, Bester had disposed of the movie rights to "The Stars My Destination" to Ashley Famous Agency—and the motion picture contract called for the control of any comic strip use!

Our solicitor both wrote to and cabled Ashley Famous Agency—but silence reigned supreme! *And that was it*—that was the note on which the Gully Foyle strip died! Considering all the problems they had to overcome, it seemed an unfitting reward for poor old Gully and his companions. Right or wrong, we made grumbling noises about what we would do the "next time" ... but the damage was done. We had lost our taste for marketing our own comic strip for a long time.

But Gully Foyle wasn't wasted. The promotional book caused considerable interest in comic circles. Al Williamson showed the book to Carmine Infantino and Dick Giordano (who demanded copies for their own collections) and

this resulted in Stan doing a comic for *The Witching Hour* #14. Again, Williamson showed the book to Western Publishing and the Pitts were asked to do a comic for *Boris Karloff* #33. The artwork for National was below Stan's usual standards, and the reproduction at Western spoiled some nice art—but, at last, Stan had the honor of being the first Australian to do original material for U.S. comic books.

Al Williamson made contact with Stan Pitt soon after the appearance of the Yarmak article in *ERB Digest* (about five years ago). For many years, Al had considered Stan to be his counterpart ... hidden in a far-off land ... unable to be contacted. In his first Flash Gordon comic for King Features, Al had swiped a few panels from Stan's Silver Starr, in the hope that it might bring some response. Stan was immensely flattered that an artist of Williamson's caliber should use his material for reference, but did nothing about it.

When they finally established contact, the Pitt-Williamson meeting became a mutual-admiration society. It is not surprising, then, that Williamson should ask Pitt to "ghost" a secret Agent Corrigan story for him. Stan agreed and this eleven-week sequence commenced appearing on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 1969. Although stiff at first, Pitt was really hitting his stride by the end of the story. Williamson was also responsible for getting Stan a number of other art jobs—so, when the time comes for someone to write the Stanley Pitt Saga, the assistance and consideration given by Al Williamson should not be overlooked. Without it, Pitt may never have recovered from the battering he absorbed with Gully Foyle ... and may have drifted away completely from the comics medium. And that would have been a great loss to the graphic story world.

John T. Ryan

-end-



## 3 – The Golden Age of Comic Fandom Interviews

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One of the chief pleasures of doing the research for *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* was interviewing many of the key individuals who, in one way or another, could be considered “fandom’s founders.”

Actually, when I began the interviews, I wasn’t thinking in terms of a *book* but rather a *column*... for *Comics Buyer’s Guide*. Jeff Gelb and I had proposed an ongoing series called “Fandom’s Founders,” and editors Don and Maggie Thompson had given the green light. They even agreed to sit for an interview themselves, since they were certainly among the target group. (That interview was recently reprinted in complete form in the new *Alter Ego* magazine—issue #11, to be exact—so it not included here.)

Because CBG published our interviews so erratically, Jeff and I finally stopped submitting them... but I continued to interview folks with the gradually coalescing concept of a book on the history of comicdom. Indeed, those who have read *GAOCF* will occasionally experience déjà vu while perusing the interviews that follow, since they were the source for many of the quotes in that tome.

*Comic Fandom Reader* has finally given me a suitable place to offer these interviews in complete form. Though they vary in length considerably, please be assured that the shorter ones are that way not because the subjects were deemed less worthy, but because of the many factors that governed the amount of time the interviewer or interviewee could devote to the conversation.

I should point out that these were conducted in three basic ways: taped telephone conversations (Dick and Pat Lupoff, Bill Thailing, Yours Truly), written responses to questions sent through the mail (Jerry Bails, Raymond Miller), and in one case via a cassette tape, where the subjects answered a list of questions that had been submitted (Marty Arbunich and Bill DuBay). I did all the transcribing of tapes.

Another thing that’s worth noting is that none of the interviewees were promoting anything; that is, they were not in “promotional mode.” As a result, I think their responses were quite candid, without a hidden agenda. They weren’t trying to steer the conversation in any particular direction. I hope this is refreshing, in an era when so many of the so-called “interviews” we read, or see on television, are really a form of advertising.

Of course, I didn’t probe much into the subjects’ personal lives, nor did I try to zero in on whatever controversies they may have been associated with, if any. My focus was on having them describe, in their own words, their experiences as comics fans during fandom’s formative years.

When *The Comics Journal* reviewed the revised edition of *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*, the reviewer described it as “an insanely well-researched book.” Insanely,

probably, because it was hard for the reviewer to believe that anyone cared enough to investigate and write about fandom of the 1960s and 1970s with any depth or thoroughness. Well, I’m a bit of a history freak. I believed (and continue to believe) that we in fandom of today owe a great debt to our forbears whose enthusiasm not only brought them into contact, but began a sub-cultural movement that had far reaching effects. But how could credit be given if no one had done the research or told the story?

History is made by the accumulated actions of many people, but rarely by a crowd; it comes down to the individual actions of certain highly motivated souls who cared enough about their cause—comic art!—to do what they could to propagate and protect and preserve it.

Individuals like Dick and Pat Lupoff, for example, who one day decided to publish a science fiction fanzine called *Xero* that would really be a vehicle for the expression of their shared interests in popular culture. Of all the topics that could be put forward in their first issue, Dick chose to write about the Marvel Family. “The Big Red Cheese” became the first in a highly influential series of articles on comics called “All in Color, For a Dime.” What if Dick had chosen to write about something else?

Take the case of Bill Thailing, who dealt in back-issue comics and related ephemera beginning in the mid-1950s. He was the one who was able to funnel many old comics to people who were desperate to read them, and in many cases, to write about them in fanzines. In those days, strange as it seems, old comics were harder to find than they would be just a few years later. Where would Don and Maggie Thompson, and Raymond Miller, and many others, have found the issues they needed for reference and research, without Bill’s enterprise and effort?

Imagine the impact on fandom’s history if one man, Jerry G. Bails, hadn’t been born? Without the Detroit-based fan who launched *Alter Ego*, *The Comicollector*, *The Comic Reader*, *Capa-alpha*, *The Panelologist* and more, would there have been someone else to lead the charge? Perhaps...but, perhaps not.

Yes, there were others who contributed a lot to the early efforts to catalog Golden Age comic books, but what a gap there would have been without the tireless research of Raymond Miller.

Would fandom have gotten along without the plethora of wonderful fanzines published by Marty Arbunich and Bill DuBay? Of course, but we would have been so much poorer without them.

I hope you enjoy reading these interviews with seven people who did so much to found and perpetuate fandom—and with one guy who did his best to chronicle those early times.



# VERO Comics



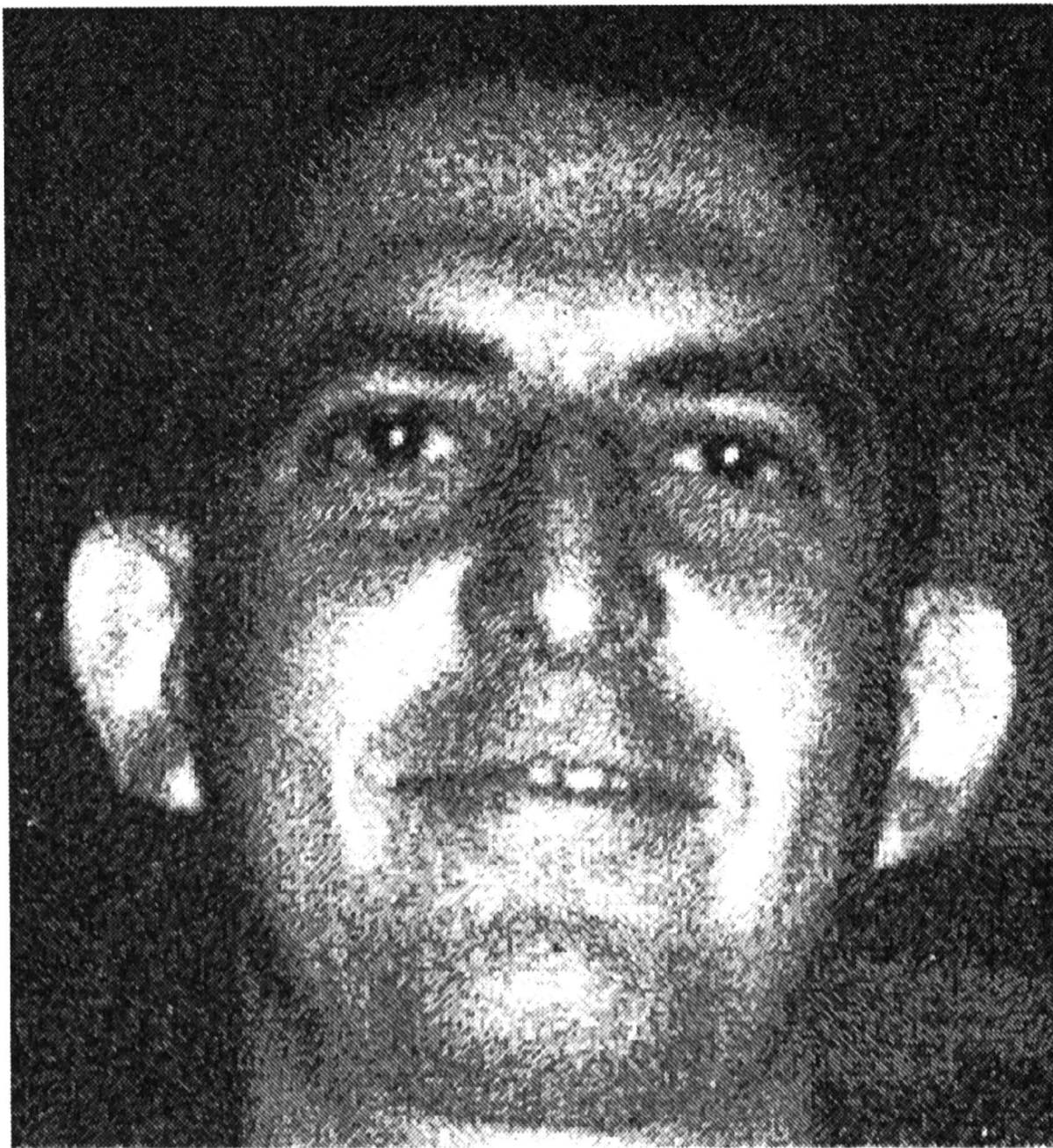
Scintillating Stories by  
JIM HARMON  
TED WHITE  
OTTO BINDER  
DICK LUPOFF



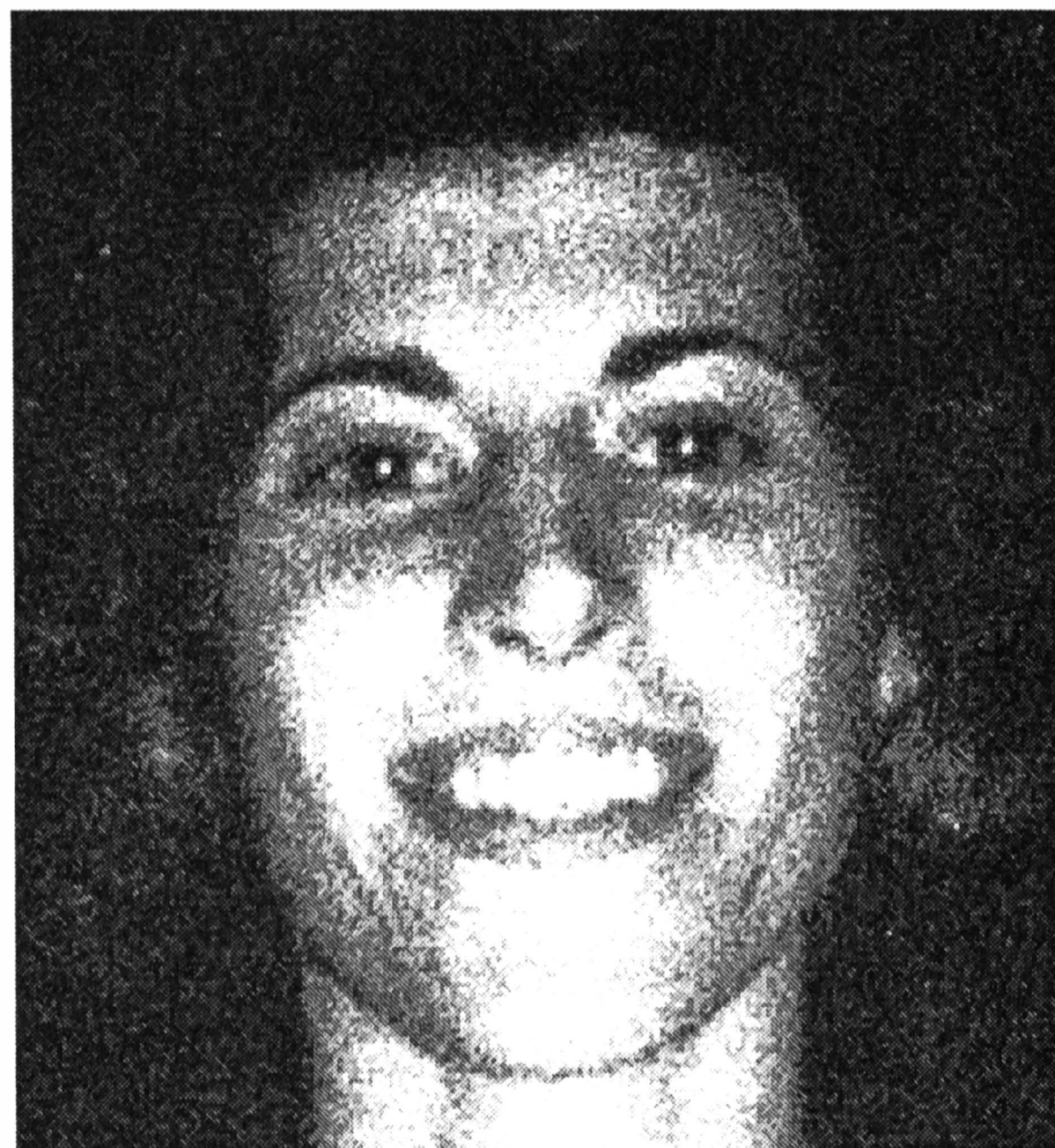
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# ***ABSOLUTE* XER**



*When the Lupoffs  
appeared as  
Captain and Mary  
Marvel at the  
1960 WorldCon,  
they set off a  
chain of events  
that helped get  
comic fandom  
started.*



*34 years later,  
they look back  
at that memorable  
experience ....  
and much more.*

## ***THE DICK AND PAT LUPOFF INTERVIEW***

*By Bill Schelly*



# Before *Rocket's Blast-Comiclector* ... before *Comic Art* ... before *Alter Ego* ... there was *Xero*.

Dick and Pat Lupoff's Hugo-winning fanzine (pronounced "zero") was a focal point for comic fans during its four-year run in the early 1960s. Since then, Dick Lupoff has become a successful writer of science fiction, fantasy and detective fiction.

I was pleased to be able to interview the Lupoffs at length on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994. There were so many questions I wanted to ask them, not just about *Xero* but about their youth, how they became involved in SF fandom in the 1950s, and anything else they cared to talk about. Dick, who carried the ball through most of the interview, proved to be a pleasant, loquacious subject.

*Bill: Let's start at the very beginning, Dick. When and where were you born?*

Dick: I was born in Brooklyn New York February 21, 1935, the younger of two male children by three years.

*Bill: What did your father do for a living?*

Dick: He was a CPA, an accountant, but during the Depression he got involved in a food processing business and did that for most of his life. When he retired from that, because of health problems, he moved to Florida, and couldn't stand idleness so he became a small-scale real estate developer and did that until the time of his death.

*Bill: I noticed in the first "All In Color For A Dime" article [AICFAD henceforth], you mentioned being in Florida when you bought your first comic book. Did you grow up in Florida?*

Dick: No, I grew up mainly in the New York area, but my family used to rent a little cottage down in Venice, Florida for the winters, and we would go down there on the train—the Orange Blossom Special or the Silver Meteor, those wonderful old trains.

*Bill: You've stated that the first issue of Whiz Comics was the first comic you read. Can you recount that story?*

Dick: Well, it was, but even prior to that, I remember as a small child lying on the floor of our living room looking at the Sunday comic strips. I recall particularly that there was Flash Gordon, and there were these wonderful, glamorous pictures. But my older brother, Jerrold, could read the stuff that went with them, and I couldn't ... and this created an almost manic state on my part. So I started a campaign demanding that I be taught how to read and write. Everybody in the family kept saying, "You're too young. In a few years you'll be bigger, you'll go to school and you'll learn this. Well, I couldn't wait three years! And I have a peculiar recollection of this which I have checked out with a number of other people, and a number of them have told me, "No, no ... it's some sort of false memory, that's impossible," but then I've had two or three other people recently tell me that they've had the same experience, and here's what it was: After my long and relentless campaign for somebody to teach me how to read, my recollection is that one day my grandmother, who had the kindest heart in the family I think, sat down with me and taught me how to do it ... and, by dinner time, I knew how to read! People tell me that's impossible, but other people tell me that they've had similar

experiences. So whether the memory is accurate or not, that is the way I remember it. [laughs] I guess we can credit Flash Gordon for that!

*Bill: So you were already a comic fan, or loved the comics, before you encountered comic books.*

Dick: Yes. I also remember in the same year, my brother used to read comic books and I couldn't; I could only look at them over his shoulder and look at the pictures. I remember in particular a Dick Tracy sequence that he was reading, about a villain named Redrum, which is murder spelled backwards. And I recall there were comic books in those days which had stories printed on the inside front and back cover that were printed in only one color, whereas the rest of the comic was printed in full color, and those struck me as really strange and interesting, because they weren't black and white like newspaper comics and they weren't like regular color comics. It was almost like looking into another kind of reality. Also in the same era I saw some horror movie, I think it was some Wolfman or Frankenstein movie, where at least part of it was on tinted stock, like the whole screen looked—green! And again I knew what regular black and white movies were, and I knew what color movies were, but this was like this third reality. It was very striking to me, as a small child.

*Bill: And of course, the earliest impressions go deep. Perhaps you could recount that first encounter with the Big Red Cheese.*

Dick: Oh, well, this did take place in Florida, in the town of Venice. My brother was going to walk from our little rented cottage into town, which was a distance of a few blocks I guess, and he was obligated by our parents to take the little brother along with him, which he was not happy to do but he had no choice. So, off we went hand-in-hand, and we got to the drug store and he bought this first issue of *Whiz Comics* and it was just ... I remember the cover, I remember the Captain Marvel story in it. It was just an absolutely overwhelming experience for me.

*Bill: What was it about Captain Marvel that appealed to you?*

Dick: I remember the origin story of this little kid walking down this spooky subway tunnel past these seven ugly statues representing the seven deadly sins ... and it just ... oh, it was so creepy and atmospheric in contrast to this bright sunny day in Florida—well, it was winter but it was like summer. It made an immense impression on me.



*Bill: And so you and your brother began occasionally picking up Captain Marvel comics and I suppose other comics...?*

Dick: That was the only particular instance that I remember our going together, but yeah ... I'm sure he read them and I read them but it was not a particularly communal activity except for that one time.

*Bill: Could you describe how your interest in comics went from that point on? Were you interested in other comics, other super heroes...?*

Dick: Yes. We went off to summer camp for a while as children, I'm not sure what age that started but it was fairly young, maybe seven... and lots of kids would be packed off with great stacks of comic books, or moms and dads would send packages of comic books to the kids. In the early 1940s I was exposed to Batman, which again with the Batcave and the atmospherics, some of the Gothic imagery in that was very impressive to me. I was very impressed by Green Lantern. I liked the costume. I liked those green flashing rays. I've always liked the color green because of that. And I've used it as a sort of theme color for atmospheric stories or events in books or stories of my own.

*Bill: At what point did you become interested in science fiction? Was that about the point that your interest began to shift as you were growing up?*

Dick: Of course, a lot of those comics had science fictional elements in them. A couple I remember reading in camp as a small child maybe as early as six: one was *Superworld Comics*, which was published by Hugo Gernsback, and had artwork, covers and some interior stories by Frank R. Paul, the great science fiction illustrator. But the story in there that I remember very, very vividly was Little Nemo In Slumberland, and I had no notion that these were forty-year-old Sunday pages being reprinted. I just read them as a child and they were absolutely wonderful. All this surreal and playful imaginativeness in them is still wonderful. Another one that I read was Disney, and the Mickey Mouse serials, which all had fantastic elements in them—strange pot-bellied airplanes, and Mickey and Goofy being stranded on remote islands with lost civilizations and the like. Another favorite of my brother's was *Target Comics*, which had the Targeteers and other super heroes in it. So these were all fun. I enjoyed them all.

*Bill: What about regular science fiction, maybe juveniles or other science fictional books that you read?*

Dick: The first of those that I remember was when I was eight years old, the school librarian, who was very, very fond of the 19th century French romantic writers, started pushing Dumas and Hugo and Verne on me. I read "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea." I'm certain that was the first science fiction book that I read.

*Bill: Pat, what type of things did you read as you were growing up?*

Pat: I read a lot. I read everything. I always liked comics. I was an only child, and my parents thought I shouldn't read

comics because I was a very good reader and they thought that was beneath me. And it became sort of a big thing where they would go out and I would take my allowance and sneak out of the house. I lived in New York City, and there was a stationery store right outside that sold comic books. They would go out to a movie or out to dinner—this was when I was like twelve or thirteen—and I would sneak out with my allowance, buy all these comics, and take them back up to my room and read them.

*Bill: What comics do you remember buying?*

Pat: I really liked a wide variety. I did love all the Captain Marvel comics. That was one thing that Dick and I had in common. I read some Superman. I liked things like *Mary Jane & Sniffles* [Dell Four Color]. I liked all the Walt Disney comics. As a younger child I loved the Mickey Mouse serials because they were really scary. And Little Lulu. That type of stuff. Then when I was older, I would read *Classics Illustrated*. Actually, although people put them down, I remember reading *Oliver Twist* and that got me to read a lot of Dickens when I was twelve.

*Bill: Can you tell me a little about your childhood, your family?*

Pat: I grew up in Manhattan. My father was a lawyer, and then he went into business with my mother's uncle, and while I was growing up, he owned his own business. It was a metal fabrication business. I guess during the war they built sides of ships, and after the war they built signs for gas stations and things like that. He did very well in business, and at sixty-five he retired from business and took up his law practice again.

Captain Marvel is TM & © by DC Comics.





*Bill: Dick, how did you first hear about science fiction fandom?*

Dick: Around 1950 or 1951, when I was in high school, I had a friend named Gerald Bregman who was a year or two older than I was, and he was interested in science fiction. He gave me an issue of *Amazing Stories*, which had a fan column in it, fanzine reviews, and things of this sort, and I sent for some fanzines and was very taken with them, because I already had decided I wanted to be a writer. One of the first things I did when I learned how to read and write was start writing stories. I was always interested in writing, always at some level or other knew that this is what I was going to do. You know, I had other flashes of fancy, I was going to become a pilot, or a lawyer, or whatever ... but always on some level I was aware that this is what I was going to do. And once I saw these fanzines, they looked to me like a sort of halfway station between just schoolboy stuff that you write in your notebook and turn in for a grade, and real professional publications. I thought, "Aha! All right, I will get into these magazines, and from there I'll move on and become a professional writer!"

*Bill: Do you remember the first story or article that you ever had that appeared in a fanzine?*

Dick: Oh boy. Uhhh. Well, I remember the first fanzine that I published myself. This was in 1952, for Christmas 1951 I was sixteen years old, and I got a portable typewriter for a Christmas present, and I immediately decided "Well, I'm going to publish a fanzine." So I did. Of course, I didn't have access to any sort of duplicating machine ... but I could get my hands on carbon paper. So I would type this thing up, and I could make maybe four copies at a time, or five—although the fifth would just look like smears on the page. [laughs] I typed the whole thing up twice, a total of about eight copies, and I would keep one for a file copy, send one or two off for review, and the rest were my circulation. It was called *SF52*, and the concept was that it would go on through the years with the digits changing. I did not originate this, incidentally. There was a digest size magazine, something like *Readers Digest*, started in the 1940s, and its title was "'47" and the next year it would become "'48," "'49," and so on. That magazine didn't last very long, and neither did *SF52*. [laughs]

*Bill: How many issues were there?*

Dick: There were four. There were only three real issues. The fourth was a simple one-pager saying that I was suspending publication for the summer, and will resume when I can, probably in the fall—which didn't happen. Although around 1982 I'd gotten my first computer, and just for fun I published *SF82* Vol. 2, No. 1, with no apology for the thirty years between issues. [laughs] The original issues had digest-size pages, so they were only small pages.

*Bill: Like 8 1/2" by 11" folded over?*

Dick: Yes. Let see ... more on my high school days. I went to a prep school in New Jersey, and they played a pretty hot brand of prep school sports, and a lot of the metropolitan newspapers carried reports on these sports. They couldn't send sportswriters down to every little school within a hundred miles, so what they did—maybe they still do this, I

wouldn't know—the major papers would make contact with the different schools, and would set up a deal with some faculty member to provide sports information. This faculty member would then gather three or four of the brighter students who were interested in writing, and we would cover the school's sporting events and write them up and send reports in to these dailies. We had a gadget called a teleprinter, that I guess was a remote ancestor of a computer modem.

*Bill: More like a Teletype?*

Dick: Yes, yes. You would sit there, and operate this thing, which had a typewriter-like keyboard, and it would type out at the other end. I guess it ran over telephone lines, I don't really know. And it would type out in the newspaper's office. With other newspapers, you would just phone the stories in.

*Bill: What was the name of the prep school?*

Dick: Bordentown Military Institute, and I hated it.

*Bill: But it did provide you with your first opportunity to do some writing and was printed professionally.*

Dick: Yes it did. Depending on the stories... we provided copy for the local weekly, the Bordentown Register, and those were fairly long stories, and I think I even got some bylines in those days, although I certainly have no copies of them. But we also provided stories to major dailies.

So there I was, even if it was only one paragraph, on the sports page of the New York Times and the New York Herald-Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Bulletin, the Newark Star-Ledger ... very significant papers. And there I was on the same page with Stanley Woodward or Red Smith or these other immortal sports writers.

*Bill: That must have reinforced your desire to go ahead and become a professional writer.*

Dick: In fact, that *was* professional writing. I don't mean to split hairs with you, but they paid for it, and that's the vital difference. They paid by the column inch, and a one-paragraph story in the Herald-Trib might produce a check for 65 cents! [laughs] But, I tell you, I was very proud of earning that 65 cents. It meant a lot to me. A lot more than much larger paychecks that I earned later in life from other sources.

*Bill: Did you do any other writing while you were in prep school?*

Dick: Yes, for the school paper. We had a peculiar system. Each spring, the junior class would elect the chief people for the newspaper for the following senior year, and I wanted to edit the paper. I had a very good friend named Richard Trout, and for some reason our classmates elected him the editor and elected me the business manager. I had no interest in being business manager, and he had very little interest in being editor. So we kept the titles to which we were elected, but in effect we swapped jobs. That's the way we ran the paper in our senior year. That would also have been 1952, the same year as my first fanzine.



Bill: You graduated in 1952?

Dick: Yes.

Bill: Did you go directly to college or was the Army next?

Dick: No, I went on to college that fall. My father's health was very poor at this point, and he retired to live in Florida. I went with him and attended the University of Miami. I got my degree in 1956. I did it in three and a half years, because the Cold War was very intense at that point, and they were drafting people, and the Army was breathing down my neck. I pressed on and got my degree in February of that year, and was in the Army by April.

Bill: What was your degree?

Dick: Journalism. A complete waste. If ever there was a field where on-the-job training is the way to do it, it's journalism. I also completed a philosophy major, which I found to be incredibly rewarding. I don't know that it's ever had any practical use. I never learned how to change a spare tire by studying philosophy, but it was the greatest intellectual enrichment of my life, and I feel gratitude to this day.

Bill: Anything else about college?

Dick: Not in particular, except that after the very, very rigid and almost fascistic life of a cadet sent to a military school that he doesn't want to go to, and was all male, I found myself in a co-ed, relatively liberal institution. This certainly confirmed my preference for the heterosexual lifestyle ... [laughs] and civil liberties. I don't want to overstate this and make it melodramatic, but the fact that the individual has rights to himself and is not part of some rigid authoritarian system—the contrast between military school and college was absolutely dramatic, like night and day. Needless to say, I prefer the latter.

Bill: Were you still getting fanzines, or doing anything with science fiction fandom during college?

Dick: Yes, to a very small degree. I corresponded with a few fan friends, and I may have written an occasional piece for a fanzine, although nothing significant. We did start a science fiction club while I was in college, but it never amounted to much because the interests of the members were too disparate. There was one person in the club who was very interested in the hard science aspects ... all he wanted to talk about was rocket formulas and plotting trajectories for orbits. We had another person who joined the club who said that he was a psychology major and that science fiction fans were obviously all crazy so he joined the club in order to observe us! [laughs] There was also a correspondence-based science fiction club run by a couple of fellows up in Jacksonville, Florida called the Peninsula Science Fiction Society. I wrote for the fanzine they published, and that was fun while I was in my late teens. I got my degree at age twenty, in January, and also had completed ROTC and was supposed to be sworn in as a second lieutenant, and they couldn't do it because I was 20 years old, so they had to wait until my 21st birthday, and then I had to go out to the office

and get sworn in as a lieutenant in the Army.

Bill: How long were you in the Army?

Dick: I was in for two years, April 1956 through April 1958.

Bill: Pat, how did you and Dick meet?

Pat: I was going to Connecticut College in New London, and I needed one physical science credit so that I could graduate. They only offered physics or chemistry; you couldn't take biology, that didn't count. So I decided I would go to summer school, because you could also take geology, which to me sounded much more interesting. But of course Connecticut didn't offer that. So I went out to Northwestern summer school and took a course in geology.

Bill: Where is that located?

Pat: Northwestern is in Evanston, Illinois. I was in between boyfriends, and I met Dick on a blind date. A girl in my dorm fixed us up. There was a blind date with these two guys who were in the Army, and I was actually supposed to be this other man's date, and my friend going with me discovered that she knew this other man from high school, and asked if I would change. Well, I didn't care ... I didn't know either of them. Somehow, I have no idea how this happened; I was told that Dick was a dancing instructor at Arthur Murray! And I thought [laughs] ... well that's very strange, but at least I'll have a good time dancing with him. We went out, and we started to dance, and he stepped all over my feet! Oh, he was really sweet.

Bill: Do you remember the approximate date this happened?

Pat: Yes, this was in the summer of 1957. We dated over the summer. I had no idea, either, because I came from the East Coast, that Indianapolis was five hours away. I thought that Dick was just driving maybe a half hour or hour to see me. Finally my roommate in college said, "He must really like you. He's coming all the way from Indianapolis." I said, "So what?" And she said, "That's a five hour drive!" [laughs] He was in the Army at that time in Indianapolis. In the fall, I went back to college to finish up my senior year. Dick kept in touch with me, and came out again ... I guess it was during Christmas vacation, and we dated over Christmas vacation. We fell in love, and he proposed to me. We were married the following August.

Bill: Prior to meeting Dick, had you any interest in science fiction?

Pat: Not so much the science fiction, although I read some Heinlein when I was a child. I was more interested in mysteries, and I still am.

Bill: When you and Dick were married, where did you live at that point?

Pat: When we were first married, we lived up in Westchester, New York. Dick had just gotten out of the Army.



*Bill: Anything else about your wedding or courtship? You didn't attend your wedding dressed as Captain and Mary Marvel? [See later reference to the Lupoffs' appearance at the 1960 WorldCon masquerade ball.]*

Pat: [listening to Dick in the background] Dick says it would have been incest! [laughing] The only other thing is that when we started *Xero*, my interest in comics sort of re-emerged and Dick and I—we were like twenty-one and twenty-three at the time, but we felt very old—and so we would go to the corner drug store to buy comics, and we'd make a big pretense of having a child, which at that point we didn't have—"This is for our little boy." You know, nobody cared! [laughs] We sort of felt that we couldn't just buy them for ourselves.

*Bill: Had you saved any comics from the old days?*

Pat: No, I hadn't ever saved my comics. Dick probably did have some comics from the old days.

Dick: Alas, no ... I had a huge dresser drawer full in the early 1940s, and this is getting back to some painful parts of childhood. My mother died when I was about five or six, and my father's business involved a great deal of travel, so that he was ... he tried to maintain the household for my brother and me, with various relatives helping out, but it just didn't work. So after a couple of years, he finally had to give that up and sell the house, and that was when my brother and I went off to boarding school ... which is how that whole thing came about. And I don't know where those comics went. They went wherever the house and the furniture went.

*Bill: I'd like to ask about this one-shot called The Rumble that you did with Walter Breen in 1960, because I think we're going to get now into the fannish period just prior to Xero.*

Dick: Pat and I had joined a science fiction fan club in New York. There had been a fan club there in the late thirties called the New York Futurian Society, and had a lot of fans

who later became professionals, including James Blish, Donald Wollheim, Elsie Wollheim, Virginia Kidd, Isaac Asimov, Frederik Pohl—I mean, this was a high-powered bunch of people. And Larry Shaw and Damon Knight. This lapsed during the later 1940s, and all through the 1950s, until around 1958 or so when it was revived by some New York fans. I forget whether they invited us, or whether we heard about them and asked if we could get involved or whatever, but anyway we became members. In the spring of 1960, the Futurians held an outdoor picnic in a public park somewhere around the George Washington Bridge, and some what was in those days called "juvenile delinquents" came around and informed us that there were two gangs planning to have a fight there. In the J.D. argot of the time, this was called a rumble.

*Bill: Like "West Side Story."*

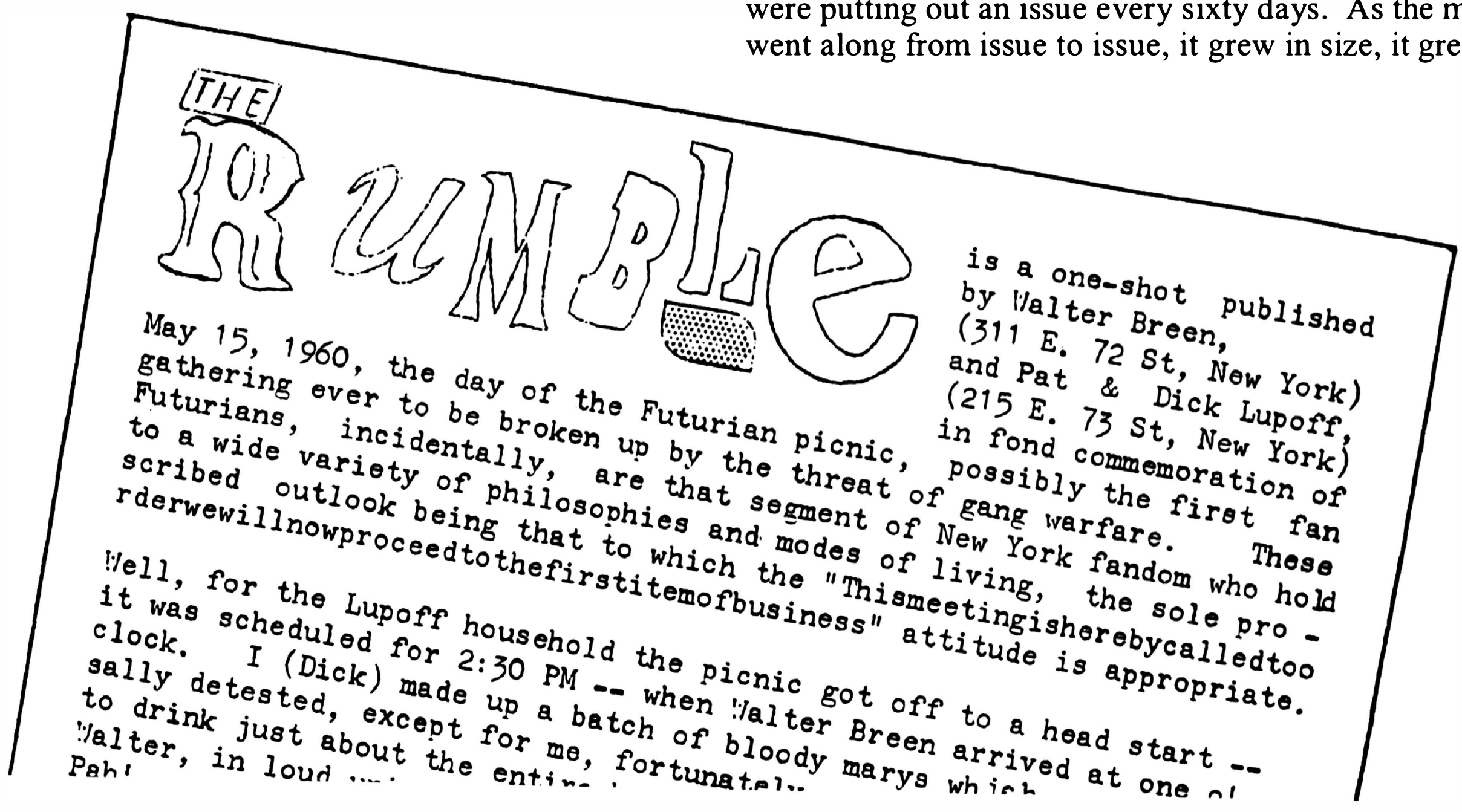
Dick: Exactly. They warned us that we would be wise not to be there when the rumble took place, because if you got caught in the middle between two feuding gangs, terrible things can happen. So [laughs] that pretty much put the kibosh on the picnic. Afterwards, we were so struck by this event that we got together with Walter Breen, who was a member of the New Futurians, and put out a little 4-page fanzine commemorating the event. That was called *The Rumble*.

*Bill: But that wasn't a precursor to anything, that was just in and of itself...? You weren't announcing in it that you were thinking of starting a fanzine?*

Dick: No, we were not at that point. However, when we started *Xero*, *The Rumble* had provoked a number of letters of comment and this provided grist for the letter column in the first issue of *Xero*, so in a sense there was a connection.

*Bill: I see. Maybe I'm jumping ahead, but what were the flyers that were referred to in the Xero Index?*

Dick: When we started *Xero*, it was something like thirty pages, and while we were very adamant about the fact that we didn't have a formal or official schedule, the fact is we were putting out an issue every sixty days. As the magazine went along from issue to issue, it grew in size, it grew in





circulation, and it became increasingly elaborate to produce, so there were longer and longer intervals between issues. So we put out little one or two or three or four-page or slightly larger interim publications between issues of *Xero*. We used one of them for the birth announcement for our first child.

Bill: When was your first child born?

Dick: 1961. His name is Kenneth.

Bill: I have a picture of him with you and the Thompsons at the 1989 San Diego convention.

Dick: He's now a manager of a comic book store in Berkeley.

Bill: According to your article "Re-birth" [Comic Art #1], it was Pat who suggested publishing a fanzine. How did you come up with the name *Xero*?

Dick: We were trying to think of something that would be a little bit interesting and unusual and attention-catching, and that would have some sort of fantasy connotation. So we thought of *Xanadu* and somebody told us there was already a fanzine called *The Xanadu Newsletter* so to avoid treading on someone else's toes, we just looked in the dictionary for other words that began with the letter X. And there didn't seem much point in calling it xylophone ... [laughs] although it's a thought. Too long. And we came across *Xero*. It's a Greek root meaning dry, but that isn't why we picked it. We picked it because it was short and interesting.

Bill: I assume you were always intending to have comic book coverage be a part of *Xero*, that it was part of the impetus...?

Dick: As was very common in those days, and I imagine it has not changed, when a couple of fans decide to put out a fanzine, the first question is "What are we going to do for material? How are we going to fill this thing?" It's very common that first issues are written largely or wholly by the editors. Then in later issues they get more outside contributors, and that happened with us. Pat wrote an essay on Sax Rohmer and his works.

Bill: "The Insidious Mr. Ward" by Pat Lupoff.

Dick: There you go.

Bill: I just happen to have a copy of part of *Xero* #1 here.

Dick: If you'll look in the index, you'll see in a later issue a fellow named Bob Briney did a big essay on Rohmer, and he later expanded that into a book, a full scale biography of Sax Rohmer. More books grew out of *Xero*, not just the AICFAD stuff. Five or six in all.

Bill: Let's see. There was All in Color for a Dime, and your Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure book.

Dick: That didn't really grow out of *Xero*. But Lin Carter did a series for us called "Notes on Tolkien" which became a book called *Understanding Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings*. A fellow named Norman Clark did a wonderful,



wonderful article called "The Greatest Shows Unearthly" about science fiction in the theater, and then he did a sequel to that, and that grew into a book largely about the old Hippodrome theater in New York. There were two books on comics that grew out of AICFAD, of course...

Bill: Also the Rohmer book...

Dick: Oh yes, in the first issue. Pat wrote about Rohmer and about Peake. Harlan Ellison wrote a movie review for us about *Psycho* that was in the first issue. And I wrote this essay about Capt. Marvel. I did no research whatsoever. It was just plumbing the depths of nostalgic recollection.

Bill: You didn't have any comics for reference?

Dick: Not at that point.

Bill: Well, it's a very nostalgic article so the information was less important than the feel ... and the memories.

Dick: [laughs] Maybe so. Of course, this also meant that it was full of mistakes, which were corrected when the book came out.

Bill: Was that when you began gathering a few old comics?

Dick: Yes, we did. I remember walking up and down 7th avenue in New York, going through old book stores, and one in particular that had stacks of comic books, and they were things like last month's issue of *Superboy*. I talked to somebody who worked there and asked, "Do you have any old comic books?" He found another area on a shelf for me in a back room where they had things that were, like, three years old. I said, "No, no, no. Do you have any old comic



books?" He took me off way into the back room, and they really had some old comic books. And I was able to start reconstructing a collection there. Also around the same time or maybe a little later, a fellow named Marc Ricci started a store in New York called The Memory Shop, and he sold old movie stills, and posters, and nostalgia and collectibles, and he dealt in comic books. He had a uniform way of pricing comic books. It was a dime a year. So if you picked some five-year-old comic, it would cost you 50 cents. If it was fifteen years old, it would cost a dollar and a half. I spent many, many an hour visiting him and looking through what he had.

*Bill: Do you have anything else to add about AICFAD?*

Dick: As I recall, in the first issue of *Xero* I said that this was the first installment of a series. The article was called "The Big Red Cheese," but the series was called either



*Dick and Pat as Captain and Mary Marvel  
at the 1960 WorldCon*

"...and All In Color For a Dime" with an ellipse at the beginning, or shortened slightly. I invited all and sundry to contribute articles to the series, hoping merely to get material for future issues of *Xero*. The response was just overwhelming! We had really tapped into something. Because nobody was paying any attention to comics in those days, especially to old comics. There was this whole generation of people walking around who had grown up on them, so once the spark was lit, things just took off.

*Bill: Let's see. You, Don Thompson and Richard Kyle each wrote two AICFAD segments, with the others authored by Roy Thomas, Jim Harmon, Ted White and Richard Ellington. Who was Richard Ellington?*

Dick: Dick Ellington was an old-time science fiction fan, Army intelligence operative in Japan during the Korean War, sometime anarchist, onetime office manager of the Oakland Symphony, later freelance typographer and book designer. He did the fine *Planet Stories* piece for AICFAD.

*Bill: How many copies of Xero #1 were printed?*

Dick: I think our intention was to have a circulation of 100, and what with spoilage and so forth—the mimeograph process is not exactly foolproof—there were probably around 90.

*Bill: How did the circulation on the ten issues of Xero develop or grow?*

Dick: I can't tell you issue-by-issue, but by the end it was over 300. Up to a certain point, we just gave them away in fandom for what they call "the usual reasons" ... swap your fanzine for mine, send me a good letter of comment, or provide artwork or something for a later issue. After a while, we started charging for it in the hope that this would discourage people because we were charging an outrageous amount. Fanzines in those days sold for anywhere from 10 cents to 25 cents a copy, and we said, "Well, let's charge some outrageous amount and then nobody will want it!" So we charged 35 cents a copy or three for a dollar.

*Bill: Shocking.*

Dick: [laughs] But instead, the circulation skyrocketed even more. It backfired on us.

*Bill: Let's talk about the Worldcon in Pittsburgh in September of 1960. I'd like to try to get into this in as much detail as possible, since it is a key event in the origin of comic fandom. First of all, isn't the Worldcon traditionally over Labor Day weekend?*

Dick: Yes.

*Bill: So the masquerade would have been on Saturday night?*

Dick: It probably would have.

*Bill: You took your Xeros and just gave them away at the con. Is that right?*

Dick: Yes.

*Bill: Any particular method?*

Dick: The fanzine table had not been invented yet, I don't think. I would go up to somebody and say, "Here, here, please take this!" [laughs]

*Bill: To the best of your memory, were you the only super hero costumes in that masquerade?*

Dick: I'm quite sure we were, or we would have noticed. The other costumes were science fiction oriented. I think Doc Smith appeared as one of his own fictional heroes. I think he went as Skylark Smith.



*Bill: How did you make your Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel costumes?*

Dick: The Mary Marvel costume was just an oversized red T-shirt, with a yellow lightning bolt cut out of a piece of cloth and stitched to it, and a yellow scarf around the waist. The Captain Marvel costume was a set of men's red long johns with some sort of yellow sash, and a lightning bolt. As I recall, I made those yellow wrist decorations by buying a pair of yellow rubber gloves and cutting off the hand part. [laughs] This is really entry-level costume making.

*Bill: Did Pat have tights, or did she have shoes? What about your shoes?*

Dick: As I recall, I wore a pair of yellow socks to simulate yellow boots, but I'm not sure of that.

*Pat: I don't remember what I wore as shoes.*

*Bill: And then you had capes, of course.*

Dick: The capes were pillowcases. [laughs]

*Bill: Okay. That would make sense. What was the reaction to your appearance?*

Dick: Everybody loved them. We didn't win a prize, because they were not great costumes, but everyone just clustered around and wanted to talk about the costumes and the characters they were based on.

*Bill: Was the set-up where you walked out onto a stage, or you walked through, or how ...?*

Dick: No. It was rather poorly planned. It was held in the middle of a ballroom. The audience was around the perimeter of the room. There was an entrance. The people who were in costume would parade around the perimeter, and then spiral in toward the center as more and more costumes arrived behind them. Nobody apparently asked the question, "What do you do once the spiral is completely jammed in?" [laughs] There everybody stood.

*Bill: Kind of crowded...*

Dick: It was gridlock!

*Bill: Was there anyone announcing, "Here comes Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel..."?*

Dick: Maybe they did, I don't recall. Probably they did, I don't know.

*Bill: So it was a rather informal affair.*

Dick: Oh, yes. There were six hundred people at this convention, and everybody thought it was huge! It was just not the way conventions are done nowadays.

*Bill: Certainly. How many people would you say were in costume?*

Dick: I'd guess fifty, but that's only a wild guess. There could have been much less or much more.

*Bill: How long were you in costume? Was that something you did for just a few minutes, and then you went up and changed?*

Dick: I remember going down in the elevator with Sylvia White, who was the wife at that time of a prominent fan named Ted White. Let me give you an anecdote about that. I was working for a large corporation at that time, so I was considered a rich fan. Ted was running some sort of little independent commercial mimeograph business in his cellar. In fact, it was called Metropolitan Mimeo, and he did *The Rumble* and the first few issues of *Xero*. Then afterwards, Pat and I bought our own mimeograph, somewhere around the fourth issue, I think. Anyway, Pat and I had reserved a room at this hotel. I think it was for \$14 a night. So Ted



*Xero #1 (September 1960)*

*Only about ninety copies were distributed, making it nearly impossible to find an original copy today.*

said to us, still in New York well in advance, "Could Sylvia and I share that room with you? We'll use one bed and you'll use the other, and we'll chip in \$7 of the \$14." And not because we needed the money, but because this was part of the spirit of fannish fellowship, we said "Sure." They arrived in Pittsburgh before we did and got the room. When Pat and I went up to the room, we discovered that they had sub-let their half of the room to a whole bunch of other fans for a dollar or two a head, a night! So they were making money on this! [laughs] You know, it was like a subway car! In a way, it was funny, and in another way it was like a nightmare.

*Bill: So you had to change in the room, and you said you were coming down in the elevator...*



Dick: ...with Sylvia White. And she was in some sort of diaphanous costume. She was a very slim, sylph-like blond woman, and she used to like to wear these filmy, diaphanous outfits. She really looked good in them. But I remember the three of us riding down in the elevator together, and she was applying lipstick. But she didn't have anywhere to put the lipstick was she was finished with it. So she asked me if I could hold it for her during the costume ball, and I said, "Well, I don't have any pockets either," but as it turned out, I was able to slip the lipstick inside my Captain Marvel costume. Anyway, again, in later years they developed something called "hall costumes" at these things, where people run around for days on end in costumes, but this was not done in that era. It was for a specific event, and when it's over, you go back upstairs, and you put on your regular clothes and you come back down. People were more formal in those days. We used to wear suits and ties, and the women wore dresses and so forth. You look at some photos of these old conventions, and you say, "My God, what is this? The Bank of America?" No, it was science fiction fans. It was a different age.

*Bill: There were movies taken of this event, weren't there?*

Dick: I don't remember that.

*Bill: I think I read an article or letter you wrote about how, later, at a Philadelphia fest or something, they were showing a movie of this...*

Dick: Yes, now that does ring a bell.

*Bill: ...and that when you appeared on the screen, even briefly, people applauded even then.*

Dick: Yes, it's all coming back.

*Bill: You attributed the response you got largely not to the quality of the costumes, but to the fact that here was Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel.*

Dick: That's exactly right.

*Bill: Can you think of any important fan connections that were made at the Pittsburgh con in 1960? How did you connect up with Bhub Stewart and George Scithers?*

Dick: I don't really remember first meetings with those guys. Stewart lived in New York at the time, so we probably met at a Futurian meeting. After a few years, the Futurians started having the typical trouble that fan clubs have, differences of values and attitudes, so some of us decided to go off and start another club, called the Fanoclasts, a name suggested by a fellow named Bill Myers. Someone asked, "You mean you guys are fan smashers?" No, we said ... we just had a kind of light-hearted, iconoclastic-like attitude. We were fans, so it became a portmanteau word.

*Bill: What was the role that Bhub Stewart played in the production of Xero?*

Dick: For the first issue, Pat and I did all the production work ourselves. Cutting stencils for the text was not hard, because I had graduated at this point from my Smith-Corona portable to a Smith-Corona electric portable, so we got nice

sharp images. But as far as the illustrations, I didn't have any particular talent in that area, and I cut the stencils for the illustrations for the first issue, and they were very, very crude, and rough looking. Somehow, through the Futurians and/or the Fanoclasts, we met a number of artists and graphics people: Bhub Stewart was one, Steve Stiles (who is still a good friend to this day, and in fact he and I did a book together in later years), and a fellow named Andy Reese who was a talented cartoonist. Those were the main three. But then we had cartoons from many other sources. Arthur Thompson, an English fan and illustrator, Eddie Jones, who was a fan illustrator. But Steve Stiles, Bhub Stewart and Andy Reese were our three mainstays, and Bhub in particular, because he started cutting the stencils and laying out the pages... planning the look for the magazine. He designed a logo for us after awhile, which was very nice looking. He really spiffed up the look of *Xero*.

*Bill: You were living in close proximity, so you could work together.*

Dick: That's right. By this point, Pat and I had moved down from Westchester, and we were living in Manhattan.

*Bill: When did you make that move?*

Dick: We lived in Westchester only about a year, which would have been from our wedding in August of 1958 to the fall of 1959, when we moved down to Manhattan.

*Bill: Is that the 210 E. 73rd Street address?*

Dick: First we lived at 215 E. 73rd, in an apartment house, and then we moved across the street to a larger apartment after our first child was born.

*Bill: What about George Scithers' contribution to Xero?*

Dick: George was publishing a Robert E. Howard fanzine called *Amra*. I just think we ran into him, and found each other mutually simpatico, and I think I wrote an article or two for *Amra* at one time, and he helped us out with some production on *Xero*. I think he had access to some cover stock that was coated with day-glo dye, this incandescent dye... and, I believe George actually printed up some covers for us on his offset press, using the day-glo cover stock.

*Bill: Otto Binder wrote an article for Xero which Roy Thomas described as "probably the first contribution by a comics pro to what was increasingly close to becoming comic fandom." How did you get in touch with Mr. Binder, and how did this article come about?*

Dick: When *Xero* first appeared, Binder was an editor at the non-fiction *Space World* magazine. I dropped off a copy at their office, Otto responded with a note, and we became friends. He contributed a brief memoir to *Xero* #3 called "At Home with the Marvels." We also invited Otto and his wife Ione and daughter Mary to be guests of honor at a screening of the old Captain Marvel movie serial, put on by the Fantasy Film Club at our apartment in New York, somewhere around 1961 or 1962. Kenneth was still a baby at the time. I got a pair of small red briefs, sewed a yellow lightning bolt on them, and dressed him as Marvel Baby.



Handed him to Otto as soon as the Binders arrived. Otto was delighted and the evening was a grand success.

*Bill: Let's skip ahead a bit. You were involved in AICFAD which was a catalyst of sorts for comic fandom, but you didn't get involved with the Bails/Thomas contingent. Why was that, that you didn't become involved with that aspect of comic fandom?*

Dick: I think we had very different attitudes, on several scores. One was, I was a science fiction fan, and when I wrote that very first article, "The Big Red Cheese," it was because science fiction fans at the time were sort of expanding their interests. Some fanzines coming out of science fiction fandom were becoming more journals of contemporary popular culture. Fans were writing about music, jazz, rock and roll, movies. Certainly, with Harlan Ellison's review of *Psycho* in *Xero*, there was no science fiction connection, other than the fact that Robert Bloch wrote science fiction... but certainly somebody writing about "I love Buddy Holly" or "I love Thelonious Monk" ... there was no particular science fiction connection. So what was happening was the spread of interest into popular culture, and that was the nature of my interest in comics. Whereas Bails and Thomas were hard-core super hero fans, hard-core comic book fans. It was a very different attitude.

*Bill: So you weren't really interested in being involved in what was happening in the contemporary comic scene?*

Dick: I was doing a little collecting at that point, but I was not heavily involved with comics fandom per se. I said there were several differences in attitude. One was a general interest in mass popular culture versus hard-core comic book fans. The other one, it struck me at that point, the people who were the hard-core comics fans were either children, or childish... whereas the people who were interested in comics in the context of contemporary popular culture had a much more mature attitude about what they were talking and writing about. And I kind of feel that way to this day.

*Bill: In "Hello There, Boys and Girls" [Comic Art #5, 10/64], you express a dim view of adults reading comics for their entertainment or artistic value. Do you still feel the same way today?*

Dick: I don't follow the comics being published today, but what I see just casually looking at them is that a great many of them are intended to be read by adults. How good they are is another question, and I don't read them so I'm not qualified to judge. But clearly the intent is that these are not aimed at kids. In 1964, when I wrote that piece, this phenomenon had not yet come about. Underground comix were about to start with things like *Zap Comics*, but they hadn't yet. So comics in those days were things like *Superboy* and *Jimmy Olsen* and *Justice League*... and these things were still aimed at kids. And for a 30-year-old to read material that was aimed at a nine or an eleven-year-old and treat it with the same kind of goshwow-ist attitude, as if he were nine to eleven years old, struck me as not being really very healthy or a mature way to deal. I still feel that way.

*Bill: I suppose that might be part of the reason you got along so well with Don and Maggie Thompson, because you were of more like-mind in some ways.*

Dick: I think so.

*Bill: Can you tell me a little about your relationship with them, because you were, after all, a major contributor to Comic Art #1 with your "Re-Birth" article.*

Dick: I guess we met them at the second World Science Fiction Convention we attended. I do remember sending them a wedding present, which was two old comic books. I knew their Want List. And there was a comic book called something like *Famous Authors* that was very similar to *Classics Illustrated* but had only a very short run... but I think they were missing #2, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. I scouted up a copy. And Maggie was a big Walt Kelly fan—I think she had met Kelly—and I found a comic book called



Landon Chesney art (from a later fanzine called 4-D) seems fitting here, as both he and Binder were contributors to *Xero*.





*Best of friends: A clean-cut Don Thompson and a shaggy Dick Lupoff get together to promote the All in Color For a Dime book.*

either *The Comics* or *The Funnies*, it was a regular comic book from about 1936 with a full color cover, but it was printed on wood pulp stock, not slick stock, and it contained some very early Walt Kelly art and some very early Siegel and Shuster material, a forerunner of Superman either called Doctor Occult, or Doctor Mystic, the Occult Doctor ... something of that sort. I found a copy of that, which is undoubtedly worth a fortune today but probably cost me \$2 then. I put these two comic books in an envelope and sent them to them as a wedding present, with a little note saying, "Comic books as a wedding present might be a trifle bit odd. If you would rather have a genuine pot, I will send you one." But of course they were thrilled with what Pat and I sent. We hit it off very, very well and we always were good friends. We met many times over the years. Around 1970, we were planning to move from Poughkeepsie out here to the west coast, and by then I had built up quite a good comic collection, a lot of early Marvel comics and early issues of *Captain America*, early Fawcetts, and a great many very good early items. Don and Maggie came to visit us. We wanted to go to "It's a Bird, it's a Plane, it's Superman!" which was playing as a Broadway play, but it closed before we got there, so we went to see "Peanuts" instead, which was playing as an off-Broadway play, because we wanted to see something comics-related, and then I said, "Look, we're moving to the West Coast. We're going to be in a state of disarray. I don't know what's going to happen to this collection. If you are willing to merge our collection with yours, just pack this stuff in your car." They had driven in from Ohio where they lived at the time. "—And we'll merge our collection with your collection, and you will have custody of it. But it will still be our joint collection." They were very pleased to do that, and it still exists to this day.

*Bill: I'm looking at a picture of you sitting next to Don Thompson in a publicity photo for AICFAD and Don is wearing a suit and tie and looking very business-like, but you have long hair, what looks like hippie-glasses, some kind of a beard or short growth, and a psychedelic vest of some kind [Dick laughs] and so I'm wondering... it does look like there's a difference between the two of you, just on the surface...*

Dick: Oh yes. There was never any difference between us in our souls. Of course, Don was working for the Cleveland Press at the time, and he had to dress the role. I had just left the computer business, and no longer had to dress any particular role.

*Bill: You stated at one point, that you did not found comic fandom. Would you at least acknowledge that you were one of the founders of comic fandom?*

Dick: That's not a judgment for me to make. Here's what I meant, very specifically: When I was talking about the difference between our attitude with *Xero* and Jerry Bails' and Roy Thomas' attitude with *Alter Ego*, it seemed to me that comics fandom, as an entity, as an institution, was taking its values and attitudes much more from *Alter Ego* than it was from us. And in that sense I felt no particular kind of connection or particular desire to be connected with comics fandom.

*Bill: In "Re-Birth," there's another odd thing that jumped out at me. You referred to the 1940s as comics' "golden age." Is it possible that this was the origin of the phrase "the Golden Age of Comics"? This article is pretty early, in 1961.*

Dick: It very well might have been.

*Bill: It'd be interesting to see if anyone can come up with an earlier reference specifically about that era of comics publishing. Of course, it's a very natural sort of term to use.*

Dick: Let me know what you find out.  
[Editor's Note: Thus far, no earlier reference has been pointed out.]

*Bill: Before Xero, Dick and Pat Lupoff weren't considered Big Name Fans. Did Xero change your status in SF fandom? How did your fannish lives change, if at all, as a result of Xero?*

Dick: There was a kind of debate that ran in the sf fan community in those days, epitomizing two mottos. One was "Fandom Is A Way Of Life," the acronym FIAWOL ... and the other was "Fandom Is Just A Goddam Hobby." We belonged very, very much to the hobby school of thought. Fandom was our hobby. It was a shared hobby, which was very nice for a young married couple to have. But, as far as our standing in the fan community, I guess one of the ways that you could become a prominent or well-known or Big Name Fan was through fanzine activities, either by becoming known as an especially good writer, or a particularly talented artist... or, an editor or publisher. So, yes... we did become much better known in the fan community through *Xero*.

*Bill: You won a Hugo.* [Editor's Note: The Hugo award is the Oscar of the science fiction field.]



Dick: Yes. That was fun.

Bill: *When was that? That would have been in 1963 or so?*

Dick: 1963, yes.

Bill: *Did you ever participate in any other masquerades?*

Dick: Yes, we went to one as a couple of Sturgeon characters called the Loverbirds, from a story called "The World Well Lost." We made token type costumes out of pale green bed sheets. [laughs]

Bill: *That was after the Pittcon?*

Dick: Yes.

Bill: *But never super heroes again?*

Dick: No, although by then you started seeing lots of super heroes. I recall the entire Los Angeles Science Fiction Society went to a convention as the Justice Society of America, and they were just spectacular as a group. Don and Maggie as Ibis and Prince Taia. He just wore a blue suit, with a white shirt and a necktie and a turban, and she wore a dress with some sort of Egyptian motif to it. Again, it was some sort of minimalist costume—it was the idea, rather than the elaboration of the costume.

Bill: *What about the very first comicon in New York in 1964. You were there. What can you tell me about that?*

Dick: My recollection is that I was still working in Manhattan for a computer company—I guess I would have moved over from Univac to IBM by then—so I just took a run downtown on the subway. Either I snuck out on an extended lunch break, or I left work early, one or the other ... and dropped in.

It was in a small, very crowded, very uncomfortable room. I saw essentially a roomful of bewildered-looking twelve-year-olds, this is what it looked like to me. I couldn't stay long, but I was frankly not very impressed by a roomful of kids drooling over last month's *Adventure Comics*.

Bill: *Weren't there some comic book dealers there, a few people with some comics for sale?*

Dick: There may well have been but I don't recall it.

Bill: *Did you ever attend other comicons as the years went by?*

Dick: Yes, I attended the 1989 San Diego Comicon.

Bill: *Was that mainly because Don and Maggie were there and it was kind of a reunion?*

Dick: That in part, and also my novel *The Comic Book Killer* had just come out, and I was doing a little bit of promotional work down there. Also, I have attended two or three of these Wondercons, which are held annually in Oakland, but also mainly to see Don or Maggie, because generally each year either one or the other has attended.

Bill: *The loss of Don Thompson must have been a terrible blow to you and Pat personally.*

Dick: We saw Maggie at the Wondercon this spring. Pat and I didn't attend the convention, but we just went over to the convention hotel and spent a wonderful couple of hours just chatting with Maggie. She mentioned that Don had had some fairly serious health problems. I knew that he had had heart trouble for some years, and had had surgery. But as of Wondercon this past spring, Maggie seemed very optimistic about how he was doing, so I was very encouraged, and assumed that we were going to have him around indefinitely. Then, at the time of his death, I got a call from my son Ken from work, and he said "Don Thompson had a heart attack, and word has just spread through the comic book stores." And I said, "Oh, how serious was it?" or "How is he doing?" and Ken said, "Oh, he died." I think he just didn't want to hit me with it flat-out. It was very sad. It was not totally unexpected, because I knew about his condition. But Maggie had been so upbeat about it just a few weeks before. As soon as I heard that Don had died, I called her. She told me that they had spent the preceding weekend at their son's college graduation, and went out with their son and his fiancée and everybody was just having a wonderful, wonderful time. The next morning, he and Maggie woke up, and she went off to fix breakfast or whatever, and came back and he had just very quietly and quickly died during those minutes.

Bill: *They are always linked with you and Pat in my mind, because Xero and Comic Art really were very similar in a lot of ways.*

Dick: Of course, *Comic Art* was more specialized in subject matter. There was a physical resemblance, and also there was a strong similarity in attitudes. I think Don and Maggie, again, always had the notion that comics, cartooning... for one thing, they weren't that narrowly focused on comic books ... but that the whole comic book-comic strip-cartooning field is part of contemporary mass culture, and I think they had a pretty grown-up rational and calm attitude toward it.

Bill: *Why don't we talk about the reasons for the discontinuation of Xero?*

Dick: There's nothing exotic about that. It was a hobby project, it was never more than that or other than that. And it was, I mentioned before, it was growing in three directions at once. The actual page count was up over 100, or around 100 per issue. It was getting very elaborate. We were farming out printing jobs, and having gatefold artwork, and multi-color mimeography and so forth, and the circulation ... although approximately 300 copies sounds like peanuts today, in those days, that was a very large circulation for a fan magazine.

Bill: *Just the amount of work involved in collation...*

Dick: Oh yes! We used to have parties to do that, and people would march around the table. Don and Elsie Wollheim would come over, and fan people would do it, anybody we could grab. It was a lot of work. We decided fairly early on, somewhere around the seventh issue, that we were going to cut it off, but rather than simply stop ... It always



5  
XERO



The Fanzone of  
Relativistic Badassery



struck me as very disorderly to stop publication and leave a lot of loose ends, so we announced that there would be ten issues, and there were. Then we did that extra index edition, not only for the sake of the index, but also to permit readers to write letters to the editor and get in their parting shot comments on the last issue.

*Bill: And at that time, you were getting ready to move, weren't you?*

Dick: Yes, we were getting ready to move from Manhattan to Poughkeepsie.

*Bill: When did you finally leave New York?*

Dick: It was after our daughter Kathy was born in June of 1964. With two children, we were thinking about school and space, and also my employer, which by that time was IBM, wanted me to move up to work at their Poughkeepsie facility. I had been working for them in the Time and Life Building.

*Bill: This is also the period of time when you were doing research on Burroughs and writing articles that lead into Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure. Can you tell me a little bit about how that book came about?*

Dick: Sure. I had never read Burroughs as a kid... maybe some Big Little Books and such. Then in the early sixties, there was a Burroughs revival. Pat read some of it and urged me to read *Tarzan Of The Apes* which I had always sneered at because I always thought in terms of Johnny Weissmuller. But I read the book, and I found a lot more merit in it than I had expected. I sort of went overboard, and tried to scout up out of print Burroughs and so forth. A little company called Canaveral Press had started publishing Burroughs' books again. I used to get my Burroughs books from a fellow named Steve Takacs who ran a science fiction bookstore on the lower east side of New York, one of the first in the world. When a certain Canaveral Press edition had been announced with publication dates, and the date came and the books weren't there, I started pestering Steve so much that he said to me, "Why don't you go over to Canaveral Press and complain to them?" It turned out they were only a block away! So I went over there and

asked, "When are we going to get the new Burroughs book?" Canaveral Press was owned by two wonderful old book men named Jack Biblo and Jack Tannen, and they said, "Why don't you come and work for us?" [laughs] So I did! I still kept my job in the computer business, because they couldn't pay me enough, although I would have loved to have worked for them full time. But I worked for them as a second job.

*Bill: What were you doing?*

Dick: I was editing Burroughs books.

*Bill: Wow.*

Dick: Some of the books were just re-issues of old Burroughs books that were out of print. In other cases, we were bringing out first book editions of Burroughs' magazine stories, or eventually we were able to get from the Burroughs estate unpublished manuscripts. So, I was editing Burroughs material, and got very, very interested, and at one point, we had a problem. We were putting together a couple of short story collections, and the stories weren't falling right to give the page count that we wanted, so one of the two Jacks who owned the company, I can't tell you which it was, said to me, "Write an introduction for that book." I asked, "What good will that do?" He said, "Write a long introduction and beef up the page count and that will make the book work." I went home and did it, and I came back with this huge manuscript. I don't mean to imply I came back the next day, but I came back with this huge manuscript. Almost as if this was a shaggy dog story, he looked at the manuscript and he asked, "What's that?" I said, "That's my introduction." And he said, "But it's so long!" And I said, "But you said you wanted a long one." And he said, "Not that long." [laughs]

But he said, "Leave the manuscript with me, and write a much shorter one to go in this book." It was a book called *Tales of Three Planets*, and it needed a ten or twelve page intro. But after he had a chance to read this, maybe 150 page manuscript, he said, "Look. You've covered only Burroughs' science fiction in this. If you can cover all the Tarzan stuff, running the same length, and give me like a 300 page manuscript, this is really good. We will publish this as a book." I was thrilled! So I did much more research and wrote the book, and that's how it came about.

Let me quote Lin Carter to you. He was a friend of mine in those fan days, and in those early professional days. He said, "Most good books get written because somebody wants to read this book, and can't find it, so he writes it himself."

*Bill: Have you published any fanzines since Xero?*

Dick: Oh, yeah. I was in an organization called *FAPA*, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, and I published a *FAPA* zine for several years called *Horib*, which is the name of a monster that lives in Pellucidar in Burroughs. It was also short for horrible, a little bit of self-mockery.

*Bill: Can you describe your involvement with SF fandom since Xero?*

Dick: Through the late 1960s, as my professional activity was increasing, my fan activity was diminishing. I recall going to a World Convention in L.A. in 1972, and having a certain feeling of shock that I could no longer identify with the fans, or feel that I was one of them. Some sort of great divide had been passed while I was not looking. Ever since then, I have not felt that I was a fan anymore.

*Bill: So you moved on to become a professional writer, almost as you anticipated fandom might do for you.*

Dick: Yes, and I never thought about that until you said it just now. But I guess...yes, when I'm thinking back to 1950, and looking at those earliest fanzines, and thinking about that... talking to my friend Richard Trout in the school newspaper office...showing him fanzines, and saying "These are my next target, and beyond that professionalism." I guess it happened, although it took over twenty years.

*Bill: What was your next book after the ERB book?*

Dick: After that was my first novel. It was called *One Million Centuries*. It was science fiction of a sort, but it had no heavy science in it. It was about a man accidentally frozen in an Antarctic glacier, and awakens in a remote, rather primitive future. Lancer Books published it as a paperback original, and it was re-issued maybe fifteen years later by Pocketbooks.



*Bill: How did you decide to put the AICFAD together into a book?*

Dick: I had that idea very early on, pretty much in the Lin Carter fashion, and I thought, "Geez, it would be wonderful to have such a book. Maybe I'll write it... or, along with a bunch of other people, I can write it." Then a man named Earl Kemp, who was part owner of a fan-owned publishing company in Chicago called Advent wrote to me, and said "I think you should collect these articles and make a book, and we'd like to publish them." I thought that was a wonderful idea, but before we went anywhere with it, a fan friend of mine named Terry Carr saw them and said, "Let me take you up to my agent Henry Morrison at Scott Meredith Literary Agency," so we thought about doing that. Although Morrison didn't become my agent at that point...or maybe he did. Anyway, somehow we got involved with a company called Arlington House, which was a very odd, schizophrenic company. They published extremely right wing political books, and they published these popular culture oriented nostalgia books. [laughs] It was a very peculiar combination. So they did the two books.

*Bill: I understand you have a third one in the planning stages?*

Dick: Actually, the plan is very well advanced. Don, Maggie and I worked it out in great detail two or three years ago, maybe even more than that. We've never been able to find a publisher for it. Rick Marschal, a graphic designer and packager type, got very excited and said that he wanted to design the book, and he would market it for us. But he was not able to find a publisher, either. So it's in limbo.

*Bill: Looking back at the Xero experience, what does it mean to you now?*

Dick: As a hobby experience it was great fun, and winning the Hugo was a great thrill, but it was essentially equivalent to some kid who gets involved in hot-rod fandom and wins a golden trophy at a hot-rod show, or some hobby trout fisherman who wins the tournament for the biggest trout of the year. It's a thrill to win, I don't mean to deprecate that, but it's not a



life-changing experience. It was fun. But, that's all it was.

*Bill: What do you think of the huge conventions we have now, like the one you attended in San Diego in 1989?*

Dick: I think they're wonderful, because the comic medium has attained its recognition, as a significant part of popular mass culture worthy of serious attention, and those conventions are not just twelve year olds, although twelve year olds attend them and they are more than welcome. But there are older people with more mature perspectives on things, and I think the whole thing is altogether to the good.

*Bill: You ended your first AICFAD article on the "Big Red Cheese" rather plaintively with the line, "I wish I had a Captain Marvel beanie." Did you ever get one?*

Dick: No.

*Bill: You never found one?*

Dick: No ... but I have a counterfeit Captain Marvel Club button, a re-issue that someone brought out years ago. [laughs] What I'd really like to have is a little Captain Marvel statuette, which they used to advertise, I believe, as being made of "genuine imitation wood." [insane laughter]

*Editor's Note: I asked Dick what he and Pat had been up to since we did this interview, back in 1994. He wrote:*

In recent years it's starting to look as if my whole family is in the media business. Pat started work as a bookseller twenty years ago. She's worked her way up to the position of manager of the children's section at Cody's Books here in Berkeley, both buying and selling books, and has built a sleepy little section of the store into a hugely successful operation.

Our older son, Ken, is publicity director of a book company in San Francisco. Our younger son, Tom, has built a career in the magazine distribution field. Our nephew, Peter, is a record producer. Only our daughter, Kathy, has avoided the dread curse of the media. She started out doing kitchen scutwork at a restaurant at Lake Tahoe, worked his way up to chef, then manager, and finally co-owner of the place. And now she's planning to move to Hawaii and find new worlds to conquer!

As for me, I've continued to work in several media—films, broadcasting, but mainly books. Some of my most recent titles have been *Claremont Tales*, *The Great American Paperback*, and *One Murder at a Time*. The first of those is a broad-ranging collection of stories, the second is an illustrated history of mass-market publishing, and the third is a collection of mystery stories.

Plans for the year 2002 include a novel or two, another collection of stories, and one or two non-fiction books on writing.

It's a busy life!

My activity in the comics field has been fairly minimal in recent years, but of course Krause Publications has reissued *All in Color for a Dime* and *The Comic Book Book*. After Don Thompson's death, Maggie and I continued to work on the proposed third volume in the series, tentatively titled *The Best Comics Ever*. At the moment we don't have a contract in hand, but if-and-when we receive one we'll be ready to move into action.

---Dick Lupoff, 8/11/01



-end-



## A Conversation with *Bill Thailing*

*Here is a transcript of another interview I did in the course of my research. Bill Thailing was one of the first used comic book dealers, even before the birth of comics fandom in 1961. As such, I thought it very important to speak with him. We talked on the phone December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994.*

*Schelly: I know you were born in 1926. What were the comics that you really liked when you were a kid?*

Thailing: Actually, apart from the hero things, what I enjoyed early on were the comics that reprinted non-hero newspaper comics. *King Comics*, *Ace Comics* ... *Super Comics* ... especially those that were not printed in the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The comics that printed strips that weren't printed in the Plain Dealer ... that's why I liked them so much. For instance Dick Tracy, especially the Sundays that appeared in *Popular and Super Comics* and *Ace Comics* had the Katzenjammer Kids and Prince Valiant. Again, that did not appear in the Cleveland Sunday Plain Dealer and *King Comics* did a Flash Gordon that never appeared in the Cleveland Sunday Plain Dealer. The Tarzan was carried full page in the CSPD so I didn't buy *Tip Top* on the stands.

*Schelly: What about when Superman came along, were you actively buying comic books at that point?*

Thailing: The funny part of it was, it wasn't Superman that caught my attention as a hero, it was Batman more, more than Superman. I kind of swung away from the newspaper reprint comics to *Batman* and *Detective Comics* in the early 40s. I had swung away from the BLB's and reprints and kind of got interested in the hero types.

*Schelly: Would you say that the DC characters were your favorites at that point?*

Thailing: Yes. I think the DC ... well, even then, even in the early 40s, DC-

National and, uh...Timely Comics were the two popular ones. And I liked *Marvel Mystery* and *Detective* and *Batman*. They were my three favorites.

*Schelly: I know you were in the military in WWII.*

Thailing: Yeah, I was in the Phillipine liberation campaign in 44 and 45. I served with MacArthur's army. I didn't get in until the tail end of the war. It was almost winding down when I got over there.

*Schelly: When did you get out of the military?*

Thailing: 1946.

*Schelly: I understand that in 1947 you started to deal in used comics and such. Could you tell me how that started?*

Thailing: I wasn't dealing ... just trading with the kids in the neighborhood, actually, in the 1940s. In fact, I got completely away from comic books when I got out of the army. All my items were tossed out. The typical story—"Mother cleaned house"—so everything I had in our hosue in Cleveland was probably donated in a paper drive. When I got out, I was more interested in girls than I was in comic books anyway...so—[laughs] it didn't hit me too bad.

*Schelly: When did you begin to realize you wanted to get back into comics a little bit?*

Thailing: I think it must have been about 1954. I was at a rummage sale of some kind and ran across some Big Little Books that I had fifteen years

earlier, and it kinda hit me there in the middle 1950s.

*Schelly: I thought I read in a profile on you in Biljo's Komix Illustrated in 1962 that you started collecting and dealing comics back in 1947 and 1948. That wasn't correct?*

Thailing: No, that's not correct. I've always been a book collector, a collector of some kind. Maybe they mistook it as a pulp collector and a book collector and a science fiction reader.

I bought *Other Worlds* and *Amazing Stories*. The Arkham House books. I felt I had graduated away from comic books and into science fiction. I was not going to monkey around with comic books, my god! [laughs] But as far as the comics were concerned, it wasn't till the middle 1950s.

*Schelly: Were you an EC reader?*

Thailing: No, I didn't catch EC when it was on the stands, for some crazy reason. I completely missed it. I was not interested in comics in the late 40s and early 50s.

*Schelly: I see. So you ran across some things in a rummage sale...*

Thailing: It was a rummage sale of some kind, and they had these Big Little Books published by Whitman. Some Popeyes, some Flash Gordons, some Dick Tracys—and right away, I'm interested, all over again! Here I was pushing thirty years old, and, uh ... thinking to myself, "Why not have the things I enjoyed when I was ten?" So the bug bit me, and I began collecting in earnest all over again.



Bill Thailing  
Box 352 Station D  
Cleveland 27, Ohio

December 21, 1960

Dear Raymond:

Thanks for your order for the Detective #37 and Wonder Woman. These were mailed to you yesterday.

I've just purchased a lot of scarce early DC issues and others. I am enclosing a list of what they are. However, I should mention that this list is being mailed to other interested collectors, so I'm afraid it will be a case of "first come, first served". Also kindly list alternates in case you choices have been sold.

Yes, Bob Kane was the originator of BATMAN, so that makes him the oldest one around from the earliest artists in that type of comic art.

The only other DC I have in bad shape is that Detective Comics #70 mentioned on enclosed list.

About your Jack Armstrong comics. Am sorry, Ray, but I'm just not interested in them, but I will be glad to let you know when I get in any duplicate early Halston Tom Mix comic. I have two Jack Armstrong Big Little Books, so I'm making them do until I can get more of the actual Radio Premiums themselves. Thanks for the information on the Jack Armstrong, and as I say, I'm sorry I am not able to do you any good on those Jack Armstrong comic magazines.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Thailing

Schelly: Somehow that lead to you dealing ... and buying rather large lots of comics and things.

Thailing: Yeah, I was buying comic books in large lots, in order to get the things I wanted.

Schelly: How did you make connections with other collectors?

Thailing: Mostly in science fiction fanzines. *Science Fiction Advertiser* ... let's see, some of the other things... In my readings of fantasy, I ran across science fiction readers that had comic books right away. I got in touch with other collectors and started trading and selling and sending out catalogs and getting all excited about these things all over again like I did when I was a kid, on a little larger scale than trading with the neighborhood kids.

Schelly: So you did it out of your home? You never had a bookstore or anything?

Thailing: No, I never owned a book store. My dealing was a sideline and a hobby and an enjoyment and a labor of love. My main interest was railroading! I worked forty-three years for the railroad. My wife and I and the kids, we'd travel all over in trains. That was fun to do. In fact, one time I attended a comic book show in New York City back in the 60s, and actually pushed one of those huge dollies onto the baggage car, and the wife and I and the kids rode free, and the merchandise was carried in the baggage car, and right into Grand Central Station, and never even had to take a taxicab. Phil Seuling had his convention right there in one of the hotels right on Park Avenue. The New

York Central owned the Commodore Hotel, I guess it was. That was very, very convenient. Phil Seuling was a nice man. He was a great influence on me. He was a great guy, that's all I can say about him.

Schelly: I got together with Raymond Miller back in 1966.

Thailing: I never met Raymond in all the years I sent letters to him. How's he doing?

Schelly: He seems fine. Still collecting and such.

Thailing: That's good to know.

Schelly: One last point, to be really clear. You said that you got in touch with comic fans through the science fiction magazines in the middle 1950s. Can you tell me specifically what magazines that you remember...?

Thailing: Yeah, yeah. I believe there was one pro-zine called *Other Worlds* that Ziff-Davis published. I used to read science fiction ... and they had a Personals column, and that's when I made contact with comic book collectors. It was a digest-sized science fiction magazine called *Other Worlds*. So about the same time I ran across these Big Little Books, and seeing the Personals column in *Other Worlds* magazine kind of fired me up to get in touch with these people.

Schelly: Was Claude Held dealing at the time you got involved?

Thailing: Oh yes, he was quite a big dealer. Claude actually made a living at it. But he was mostly in coins and stamps, science fiction magazines. I made his acquaintance that way.

Schelly: I've heard he got involved in it around 1950.

Thailing: I guess it was then... although he told me that even when he was a kid in Buffalo they had science fiction club back in the late 1930s. Kids would bring science fiction books and sell 'em that way, so I guess that's how he got started.

I wish you a lot of luck on your book. I wouldn't mind having a copy.

Schelly: I'll send you one!

-end-



*Jeff: What is it like to collect comics in the forties?*

Raymond: That's a long way back to remember! I do recall where I bought *Captain Marvel Adventures* from 1943 to 1946, in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania. It wasn't really what one would call a newsstand. Comic books were stacked on tables. I remember Captain Marvel made up quite a stack, and it was the only title I bought regularly up until 1946 (so I was in on the Mr. Mind serial from start to finish). My earliest *Captain Marvel* purchase was #18, with the origin of Mary Marvel, and my buying didn't end until #110, eight years later.

I do faintly remember buying some Fawcett bagged comics at the local 5&10 sometime in 1943. If memory serves me right, there were five in a bag. But it was 1946 to 1950 when I really got into it.

Now that I think back on it, I often wonder where I got the money to buy what I did. I bought every Fiction House title from 1946 to 1948, *Batman* and *Superman*, *Phantom Lady*, *Blue Beetle*, *All Top*, etc. Then I branched into all the Fawcett westerns and, later, the EC's.

In those days, you didn't need a comic book store. You could buy comics at newsstands, drug stores, grocery stores, 5&10 stores. I must have had access to at least ten different places to buy comics in a town of nine thousand people.

I never stopped collecting, although I sold or traded just about every comic book I bought from 1946 to 1955 during the 1960s, for pre-1946 comic books. That was when you could get 25¢ to 50¢ in trade for them. Imagine, *Planet Comics* #50 or *Tom Mix* #3 or *Captain Marvel Adventures* being worth 50¢. *All Star* #3 to 16 or *Batman* or any early Golden Age comic book could be had for 75¢ to \$1.50 per comic. The first pre-1945 Golden Age comic book I bought in 1961 was *World's Finest* #8 for \$1.50, from Bill Thailing. Bill really got my Golden Age collection going, selling me comic books for 75¢ to \$1.50 that today you couldn't touch for under \$75.

*Jeff: Did your friends collect comics in the 1940s, as kids do today?*

Raymond: I was pretty much alone. I don't recall any of my friends actually collecting comics. Sure, they bought them, but to them they were something you read and then tossed into a corner. I kept mine in neat stacks on a shelf. By the way, I never bought more than one copy of a first issue ever.

*Jeff: Did you ever loan comics to your friends?*

Raymond: Only once. In the late 40s, I lent some comics to a friend, and when I asked for them back, I found out that my friend's older brother had traded them to someone else. That was it. My comic books never left my house after that!

*Jeff: Historically, parents and comics don't mix. Was it any different in the 40s and 50s?*

Raymond: They never objected to my buying comic books. Maybe it was because I always did my own bedroom cleaning, even as a kid. With two sisters, I always ended up with the smallest bedroom in any house we ever lived in. So I never had much space after I fit in my bed, dresser, and all my other stuff, including the comics. So my mother always

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## Interview with **RAYMOND MILLER**

by Jeff Gelb

***It's a Golden Age fan's dream come true, and Raymond Miller has lived it: He was born in 1931, which made him of prime comic book buying age during the 1940s, the legendary Golden Age of comics. Twenty years later, as the first comic book fanzines were appearing, Miller turned his boyhood love of comics into a seemingly endless series of hero, title, and company histories. For several years during the mid-1960s, it was hard to open a fanzine and not see Raymond's writing or traced artwork—full of enthusiasm for the medium he has enjoyed since he was just a boy.***

said, "I don't care what you buy, just take care of your bedroom." And I did. I still do.

*Jeff: Were you ever asked to donate your comics to wartime paper drives?*



Raymond: Nope. I still have more than thirty comic books in my collection that I originally bought from 1942 to 1945.

*Jeff: When the Silver Age began, how did you feel, seeing your childhood heroes being re-introduced?*

Raymond: I was flabbergasted! During the 50s, the EC's pretty much kept me going, but it was slim pickings till *Showcase* #4. I was so starved for super heroes other than Superman and Batman that when the new Flash, Green Lantern, JLA, Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Fly, and the rest came along, it was about like dying and going to comic book heaven! I don't think I missed an issue of *Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *JLA*, *Atom*, *Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man* and the other Marvel super heroes throughout the entire 1960s.

*Jeff: What was your first fanzine contribution?*

Raymond: I don't recall how it came about, but it was likely *RB-CC* [*Rocket's Blast-Comicollector*], for which I did a lot of work in the 60s and 70s. I did so many articles for so many different fanzines that I could never say for sure what I did or where they appeared. I did "Information Center" for *RB-CC*, whole zines for G. B. Love (then publisher of *RB-CC*), like the *Rocket's Blast Special* on Timely comics, *The Illustrated Comic Collector's Handbooks*, etc. I wrote what I think was the first long history of Will Eisner's career for Bill Schelly's fanzine *Sense of Wonder*.

*Jeff: Who were some of your fan friends back then?*

Raymond: I made a lot of friends during the 60s and 70s in this hobby, if corresponding through the mail qualifies as friends. In fact, I still write to three guys I've known since the 1960s.

A few years ago, I lost one of my oldest pen pals, M. C. Goodwin. M. C. supplied me with lots of Golden Age info when I was writing fanzine articles. We had a lot in common: comics, old serials, B-movie Westerns, books, and so forth.

Other guys I corresponded with back then included Jerry Bails, Howard Keltner, Dick Hoffman, Bill White, Ronn Foss, Henry Steele, Howard Siegel (who did a column in *RB-CC* at the same time I did), Kenneth Heineman, Rick Durell, Hames Ware, Glen Johnson, Richard O'Brien, and Don Rosa. Correspondents Mike Nolan and Don Foote used to visit me during the summer for a day or two, Mike coming all the way from California.

*Jeff: Why did you stop contributing to fanzines?*

Raymond: A number of reasons. I had to take care of my mom, who had multiple sclerosis, which became a full-time job in her last year (1976). And by 1976 fandom was down to just about one well-known fanzine, *RB-CC*. I'd done "The Information Center" for years, but most of my knowledge was about Golden Age comics, and more and more readers were starting to ask about the Silver Age. So I ended up turning my column over to Don Rosa.

I don't really miss those days of writing all those articles. It was fun but it was another time. I've kept most of the *RB-CC*'s with my writing, but that's about it.

*Jeff: What's your fondest memory of the early days of fandom?*

Raymond: The cheap comic prices and others, like me, who were willing to trade or sell for what they wanted without getting rich. If someone had a comic book I wanted and I had one they wanted, it wasn't, "I'll trade you but I'll have to have two or three others for the one you want." These were one-for-one trades. I remember trading late 40s Rocky Lane Westerns to Bill White for early 1940s super hero comics. Try that today!

*Jeff: What's the best development in comic collecting since fandom's early days?*

Raymond: Comic shops and comic conventions.

*Jeff: How do you feel about today's comic books?*

Raymond: There are a lot of good comics on sale now, but I can't afford them, so I buy very few. I do buy the EC reprints, and an occasional *Superman* or *Batman*. But my favorite comics were those during the Golden Age: *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Captain America*, and *Batman* were my all-time favorites.

*Jeff: Do you still re-read your Golden Age collection?*

Raymond: Not in years. That doesn't mean my collection just sits there in boxes untouched. I like to display my comics, for my pleasure, once a year. I have a big piece of plywood that holds eighteen comic books and, right after New Year's, I set up my board and display eighteen comics a day. That way, I pretty well know what I have and what the covers look like without having to check my list. It takes me about three-and-a-half months to display them all.

When it comes to the Golden Age, I'm more or less a total collector; I try to have at least one copy of every title (except Dell Four Colors) published before 1949. And this includes Walt Disney's Comics and Stories, Mutt and Jeff, early ACGs, ME, Fiction House, Fawcett, Dell, DC westerns, etc. And not just super heroes. But no horror or science fiction outside of EC.

*Jeff: What makes the Golden Age comics so special to you?*

Raymond: Memories! The 40s are still my favorite decade—64 page comics for 10¢, or later, 52 pages for ten cents. Read a World War II comic book and you have a history of World War II. Later in the 40s, you could ride with one of your favorite B-Western heroes every month in the comics.

Think of it. In just about five years, most of the characters were created who are still remembered today. A true Golden Age collector will find Magno and Davy, Catman, Captain Freedom, U. S. Jones, TNT and hundreds of others just as fascinating as Superman, Batman, Captain America or Captain Marvel. Even most of today's better-known heroes have been at it for more than thirty years.

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*Raymond Miller wrote the introduction for the first volume of Tony Santangelo's Echoes, the first in a series of trade paperback books from Solson Publishing devoted to full-page illustrations of each and every Golden Age hero. Copies remain available from Bud Plant Comic Art as of this printing. [www.budplant.com](http://www.budplant.com).*



# Interview with Jerry Bails

Interviewed by Bill Schelly in 1993

*Generally recognized as one of the primary founders of comic fandom, Jerry G. Bails, Ph.D., published Alter-Ego (initially hyphenated), the first comic fanzine devoted entirely to costumed heroes and heroines. Among many other accomplishments, Jerry founded Capa-Alpha (the first comics amateur press alliance), the Alley Awards, and the Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors, and compiled the Who's Who of American Comic Books. He was a professor of science and technology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, until his retirement several years ago. Currently he is an active contributor to the Grand Comics Database, among other projects.*

*Bill: What's your first memory of comics or buying comics?*

Jerry: My earliest distinct recollections of comics are of marveling at all the magnificent covers hanging by bulldog clips in the window of my favorite shop that sold comics. It was a local dry goods store across the street from what would become my dad's pool hall in my hometown of Kansas City, Missouri.

One of the earliest covers I recall from my youth was on *Flash Comics* #20, where The Flash was hurling a crook onto overhead telephone lines. That issue was dated August 1941. At almost exactly the same time, I spotted *All-Star Comics* #6. It marked the very first time I would witness The Justice Society of America, starring all my favorite heroes teaming up in a book-length adventure, fifty-eight pages for a dime. That comic book had the most profound long-term effect on me. Spotting the covers of #6 and #7 were ecstatic moments for me. I can still feel a rush of endorphins just recalling the covers. I bought every issue of *All-Star* and followed the members' adventures in DC's other titles faithfully.

*Bill: How would you compare The Justice Society to today's super-hero teams?*

Jerry: No group today is quite like the original JSA. The Justice Society was an egalitarian group of psychologically mature adults, not a pack of adolescent neurotics who needed

a father-figure to keep them in line. While the JSA did elect a chairman, the chairman never bossed around the other members. In my youth, I didn't fantasize about being a kid with super-powers who was able to get away with murder and mayhem. I fantasized about being an adult super-hero capable of putting the world in right order.

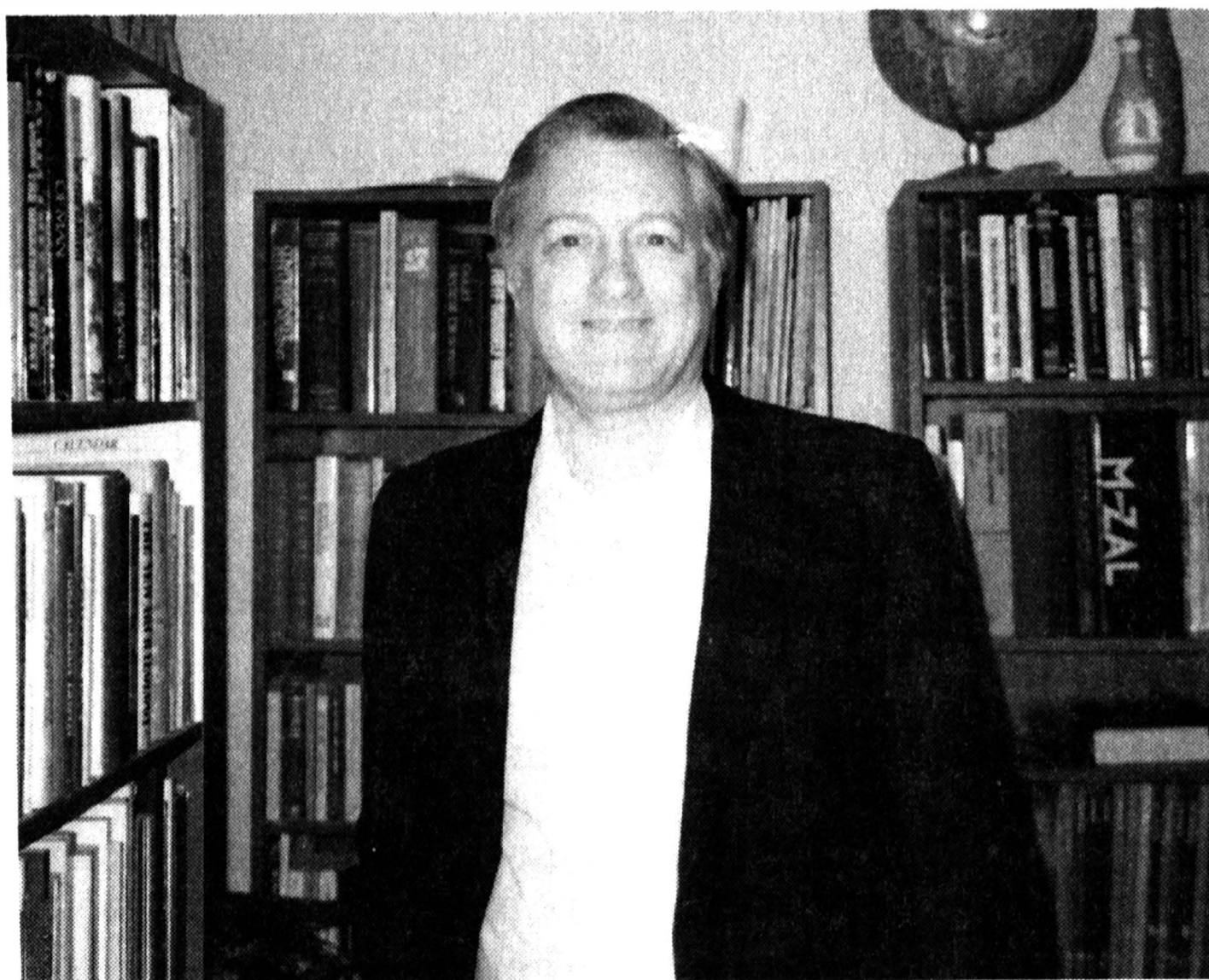
*Bill: Do you still have the original copies of All-Star Comics you bought back in the 1940s?*

Jerry: Unfortunately, I cut up my *All-Stars* to make a scrapbook. It wasn't until 1945 that I realized that I wanted the comic books themselves intact. For the next six years I searched through every back-issue store in town for the early issues.

*Bill: Did you continue to collect comics in the 1950s?*

Jerry: When my subscription to *All-Star Comics* was filled out with a title called *All-Star Western*, in 1951, I lost interest in comics. That was fortunate, I guess, because it allowed me to complete nine years of higher education without too many distractions. Except for my perpetual search for back issues of *All-Star*, which extended to writing the publisher, artists, and Writers, I was no longer

addicted to comics. I never cared for most of the other genres that displaced the super-heroes. But I checked the stands sometimes, dreaming of the birth of a new heroic age.



Jerry Bails





*Jerry in the midst of one of his favorite activities—compiling data about American comic book writers and artists.*

*Bill: When did you become aware that the super-heroes were returning?*

Jerry: About 1959 when I discovered the third try-out issue of The Flash in *Showcase*. Real addictive collecting began again for me that year, which just happened to be the year I finally finished my *All-Star* collection. I purchased the private collection of the JSA's creator-author, Gardner Fox, with whom I had corresponded for several years. Some months later, I began a correspondence with Roy Thomas, who had been given my address by Gardner. Roy had also

been trying to track down *All-Star*, and I just beat him to Gardner's personal bound volumes by a matter of months. Despite this initial disappointment for Roy, he and I became fast friends and plotted many of the ideas that got comics fandom off to a start in 1961.

I believe that Roy and I were somewhat instrumental in encouraging Gardner and his editor, Julie Schwartz, to bring back other heroes, especially Hawkman and The Atom. I do know that we both bombarded DC with scores of letters. Issue #4 of *Justice League of America* is filled with letters from me under different pen names. Don't blame Julie for



this. I did everything I could to fool him, including mailing the letters from all across the country.

*Bill: Can you pinpoint the date when the idea of a fanzine occurred to you?*

Jerry: *Alter-Ego* #1 was mailed out in March 1961, but, along with Roy, I conceived the idea of a magazine for comics fans about nine months earlier.

*Bill: Weren't there other fans who had similar ideas around the same time?*

Jerry: As fate would have it, *Alter-Ego* #1 hit the mails just before Don and Maggie Thompson's fanzine *Comic Art*. The conditions giving rise to the concept of a comics fanzine were in the air. Had there been no Jerry or Roy or Don or Maggie, someone else would surely have come up with the idea. While we borrowed terminology and ideas from science-fiction fandom, comics fandom was a phenomenon in its own right from 1961 on.

*Bill: After Alter-Ego, you started The Comickollector, the first ad-zine. Yet you quickly shed A-E and CC to published On The Drawing Board, which featured news of the pros. Why?*

Jerry: My initial conception of *Alter-Ego* turned out to be unrealistic. I wanted well-researched articles and features, comic strips, news, and ads. Each of these features demanded different deadlines. *The Comickollector* was the first spin-off in September 1961. Eventually, the "On The Drawing Board" news feature became a separate newsletter, which later evolved into *The Comic Reader*. All of these publications had a life long after my tenure, each becoming more and more professional over the years.

By the end of 1961, other comics fanzines devoted to the Second Heroic Age began appearing. *The Rocket's Blast* by G. B. Love, *Komix Illustrated* by Biljo White, *The Komix* by John Wright of South Africa, and *Masquerader* by Mike Vosburg were some of the earliest. Each one I found enjoyable and full of creativity.

*Bill: When was the first major fan gathering?*

Jerry: I threw the first comics fan party in March 1964 to tally the 1963 Alley Awards. In attendance were Don and Maggie, Mike Vosburg, Ronn Foss, Larry Raybourne, and Grass Green, among other active fans of those early days. It was at this Alley Tally that we were visited by a reporter from *Newsweek*. We had just hit the media with an article in the *New York Times*. [Editor's note: Jerry's memory is playing tricks on him here. The meeting with Hugh McCann, the *Newsweek* stringer, occurred in Jerry Bails' living room on January 16, 1965, about nine months later. A transcript of much of that interview appears in *Alter Ego* Vol. 3, #12 from TwoMorrows Publishing.]

I attended a number of the first conventions. I even helped Shel Dorf launch the first real full-fledged comics convention, the Detroit Triple Fan Fair, in July 1965. Later I stopped attending comics conventions because they became over-commercialized and lost the sense of intimacy that I loved.

*Bill: What aspect do you value most about comic fandom?*

Jerry: I tremendously enjoy the contacts with so many wonderful people. My fan-friends come from all walks of life and from all over the world. They have sustained me through many hard times. Fandom has always been there for me when I needed a lift. I am especially proud and happy that so many of my fan-friends have become comics pros. They are surrogates for me.

*Bill: Is there one particular contribution you made to fandom that gave you the greatest satisfaction?*

Jerry: I have enjoyed my life-long pursuit to bring recognition and respect to the creators of comics. That's why I microfilmed ninety-eight percent of all Golden Age comics and have spent thirty years producing the *Who's Who of American Comic Books Database*. In my search for data, I have received letters from hundreds of artists,

writers, editors, and production people. I cherish these contacts.

*Bill: What comics do you still collect?*

Jerry: I guess I don't qualify as much of a collector any more. I have been selling my comics collection, except for my *All-Stars* and all post-1961 appearances of the JSA characters. I also have a collection of original art sampling the appearances of the JSA in the Second Heroic Age, which I will always keep. I only have a handful of Golden Age comics.

Meanwhile, I save very few of the current comics; at present, only Green Hornet titles and the new Valiant line. If a series is especially good, like *Watchmen*, then I may buy a nice complete edition for further reading enjoyment.

*Bill: What has been your greatest disappointment with comics collecting?*

Jerry: The commercialization of comics fandom. It led, even early on, to greedy and exploitative dealers. Contrary to what my old friends Don and Maggie Thompson said recently in a news article in *CBG*, it was never one of my dreams that old comics would be auctioned for tens of thousands of dollars.

In terms of today's comics, I am appalled by the gimmicks designed to grab every dollar from a youngster's pocket. For me, sealed copies and multiple-cover issues represent capitalism at its worst, and I wouldn't be caught dead buying any of them. 'Nuff said!

*Bill: What are some of the things you would like to see happen to comic books?*

Jerry: Before I leave this mortal coil, I'd like to see new outlets for comics developed and more effort made to reach younger readers and book-reading adults. Today, the creators of comic books enjoy a respect and remuneration many times greater than they did even twenty-five years ago. For that I am grateful. That, after all, was a big part of why I remain a fan and not just a reader of comics.

-end-



HI GANG!

# Marty Arbunich

## Remember the

Thanksgiving 1994:

When I initially got in touch with Marty Arbunich and Bill DuBay during the process of researching *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*, I found out that these two guys—who had teamed up to produce numerous comics fanzines in the early 1960s—were still the best of friends.

Some of the publications they were known for were *Fantasy Hero*, *Yancy Street Journal*, *Voice of Comidom*, *Comic Caper*, *Fandom Presents* and *All-Stars*. Along with their friends Rudi Franke and Barry Bauman, they formed a publishing consortium called Golden Gate Features.

I think it was Marty who suggested that he and Bill sit down and make a taped interview for me. I would supply a list of questions, and they would do their best to answer them. The finished tape was a sheer delight, not only for the information imparted, but for the way it captured the free-wheeling spirit of their friendship. Therefore, I'm very pleased to be able to print the transcript here—and with very little editing. That way, their memories and repartee are presented in their most unvarnished, and charming, form. I hope you enjoy it!

MARTY: Hi Bill [Schelly], this is Marty, and this is how I sound.

BILL: ...and this is how I sound.

MARTY: So it'll be up to Bill [Schelly] to figure it out, because he's gonna have to transcribe this, not me. Let's see. His first question is, "How and when did you meet?" That's an easy question.

BILL: Were you six or seven? Didn't I kick your butt in the schoolyard?

MARTY: It was in St. Paul's Grammar School, right?

BILL: That's right.

MARTY: What grade did we start at together? When did you first go to St. Paul's Grammar School?

BILL: First grade.

MARTY: So I guess we started out in first grade, continued all the way through eighth grade. We both graduated from that ... establishment. Moved on to a Catholic high school together, called Sacred Heart High School. I made it through four years, Bill made it through ... two? That right? Before you got to the Big House? [laughs]

BILL: Three. I decided, enough parochial school. Sacred Heart was an all boys' school, and I wanted at least one year of dating girls in high school. As I recall, Marty, you didn't have one date for the entire four years. [laughter]

MARTY: No, that's not true.

BILL: Okay, there *was* that *one*.

MARTY: I hope he doesn't write all this stuff down as being fact. You can only tell the truth, Bill. Don't



# *And Bill DuBay*

## Old Days

*exaggerate.* Let's make this real. Uhh, so we answered question number one for you. Question number two, "How and when did you first hear about comic fandom?"

BILL: I read about it in the letter's pages of some comic book and wrote away for my first fanzine, *Alter Ego* #5, March 1963, edited by Ronn Foss. When that arrived, my search for old comics shifted into high gear. That's when the ongoing treasure hunt began in earnest.

MARTY: Treasure hunt meaning...

BILL: ...the continuous search for *old comics*. I'd go into old bookstores and scrounge around in any corner that looked like it might be even remotely harboring some dusty old periodicals. A lot of the old book stores in San Francisco used to sell castoff comics in cellophane wrappers, two for a nickel. I think the treasure hunt is really what got you interested in comics, Marty.

MARTY: Actually, it seemed like I got interested at the end of grammar school a little bit, cause I would come over to your house.

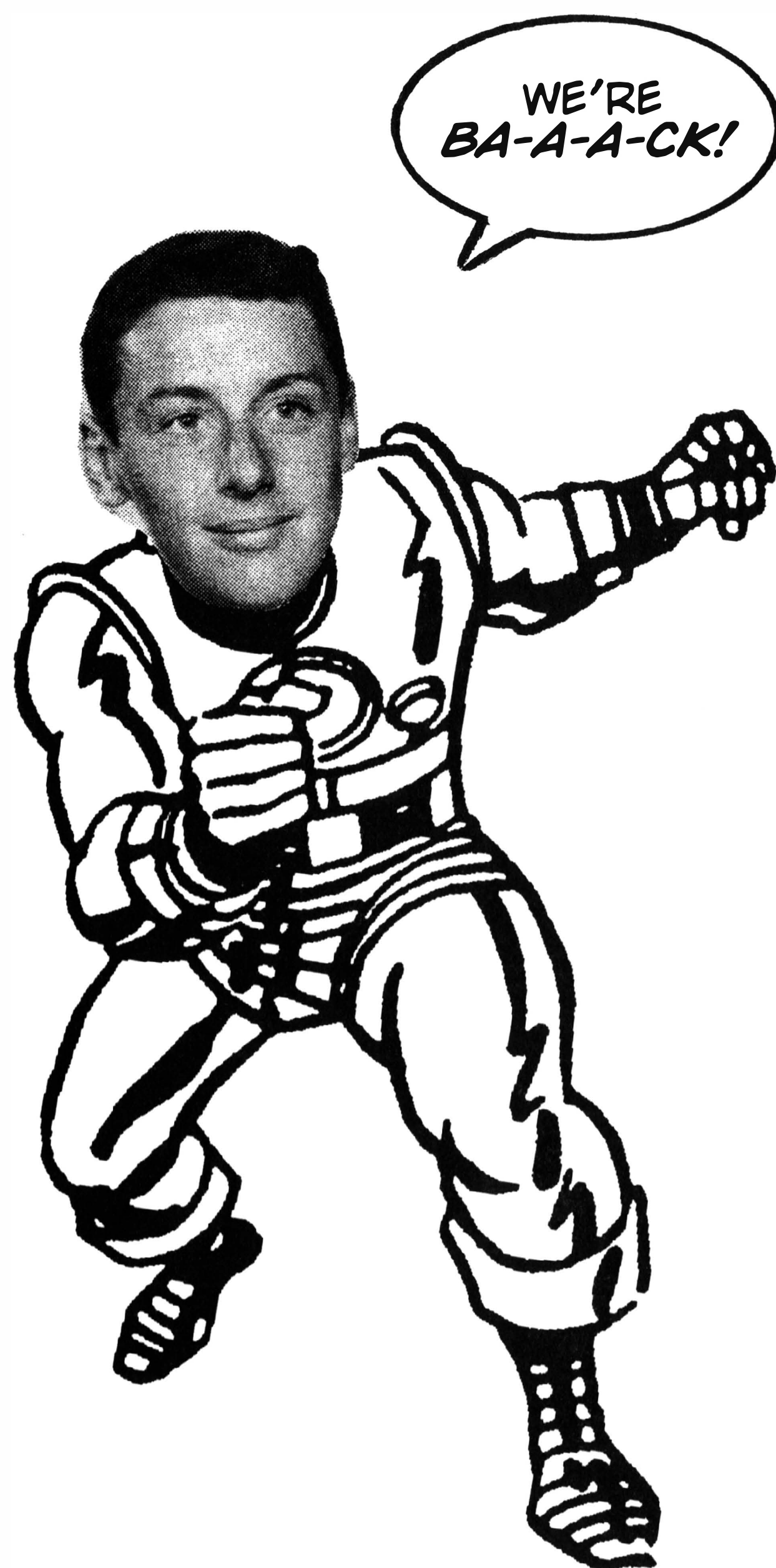
BILL: No, we didn't really get tight until high school.

MARTY: You were living at 57 Chenery Street then.

BILL: Right. We were in the same upper class at Sacred Heart.

MARTY: Yeah, 9-B together. For me the thing that made it kind of interesting was, I guess you had brought up the idea of publishing our own fanzine. The idea of producing something... even though comics were *kind* of interesting for me... it seemed that what was even *more* interesting was the production end of it—*making something*. Also, I quickly developed an appreciation of comics, and 'collecting' fit into my lifestyle, still does to this day with other things. We had that common interest. I'm just trying to think, when we first started publishing, were you publishing something before I came along?

BILL: I'd just started publishing *Fantasy Hero*.



MARTY: Was it already out by that point?

BILL: I don't remember if I'd finished the first issue, or if we somehow came together in the process. I just remember that you had this intense fanzine envy. Then you said something like, "Wow! If *you* can do this, anybody can." (I always loved your subtle compliments.) My take was, "This is hard work! And this boy sounds like he can be finessed into doing some of the grunt load." I drew strips for that thing, and wrote it cover to cover on those awful purple ditto masters. It was eventually printed in the high school basement by your favorite journalism teacher, Richard Perkins. He thought it was great for a kid to be so ambitious.

MARTY: At the high school?

BILL: Yeah! Tom Sawyer had nothing on me! And that ditto machine—when I saw it working away, I knew I had to have one.

Continued after next page



RUDI FRANKE and BILL DUBAY; editors

# FANTASY HEROES' HANGOUT

Now, for the first time in the history of comicdom....TWO great comic fanzines come together to give you the best work fandom has to offer. FANTASY HERO, and HEROES' HANGOUT present to you, the first of many such fanzines...FANTASY HEROES' HANGOUT!! Meet for the first time fans such as JOHN WRIGHT, STEVE PERRIN, KEN TESAR, MIKE VOSBURG, BARRY BAUMAN, RUDI FRANKE, MARTY ARBUNICH, AND BILL DUBAY !!! Pictures of these and many more top names in issue no. 1 of this award winning fanzine. See such features as...

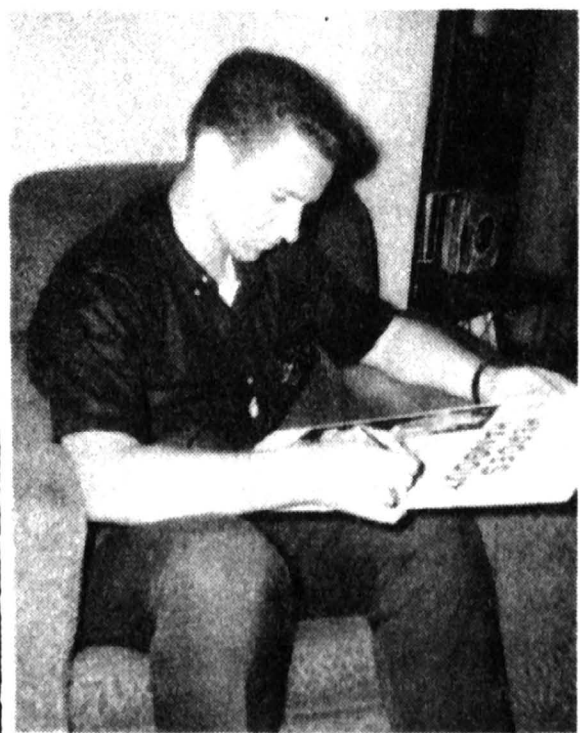
\*The INVINCIBLES, a sixteen page strip featuring the revival of the ORIGINAL GRAY GRASSHOPPER, fandom's only hero revived from the GOLDEN AGE of COMICS !!!

\*The NADAR GROUP...a sixteen page thorough article on the comics group which brought you such greats as The BLACK TERROR, FIGHTING YANK, DOC STRANGE, and PYROMAN !!!

\*The CARTOONIST'S CORNER...a revealing 'behind the scenes' view of your favorite comic creators !!!

\*PLUS, a four colored LITHO cover !!!

\*Plus features so astounding, they'll make you wonder if you're really reading an AMATEUR magazine !!!



RUDI FRANKE

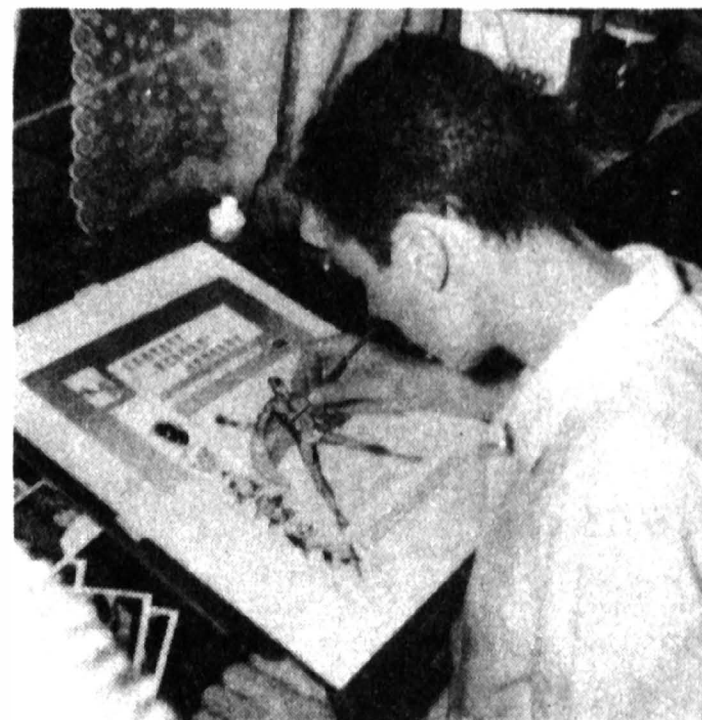
'prince of the inks'

## FANTASY HERO

One of America's finest bi monthly,ditto'd fanzines! Art, stories and articles by comicdom's top writer and artist contributors! Original hero creations, plus the only character revived from the GOLDEN AGE, especially for comic fandom... The GRAY GRASSHOPPER!!! A bygone fanzine, worthy of the high praise of periodical collectors.

Edited by Bill Dubay

and Marty Arbunich!!!!



BILL DUBAY

'fastest draw in the west'



MARTY ARBUNICH

'the writer master'



BARRY BAUMAN

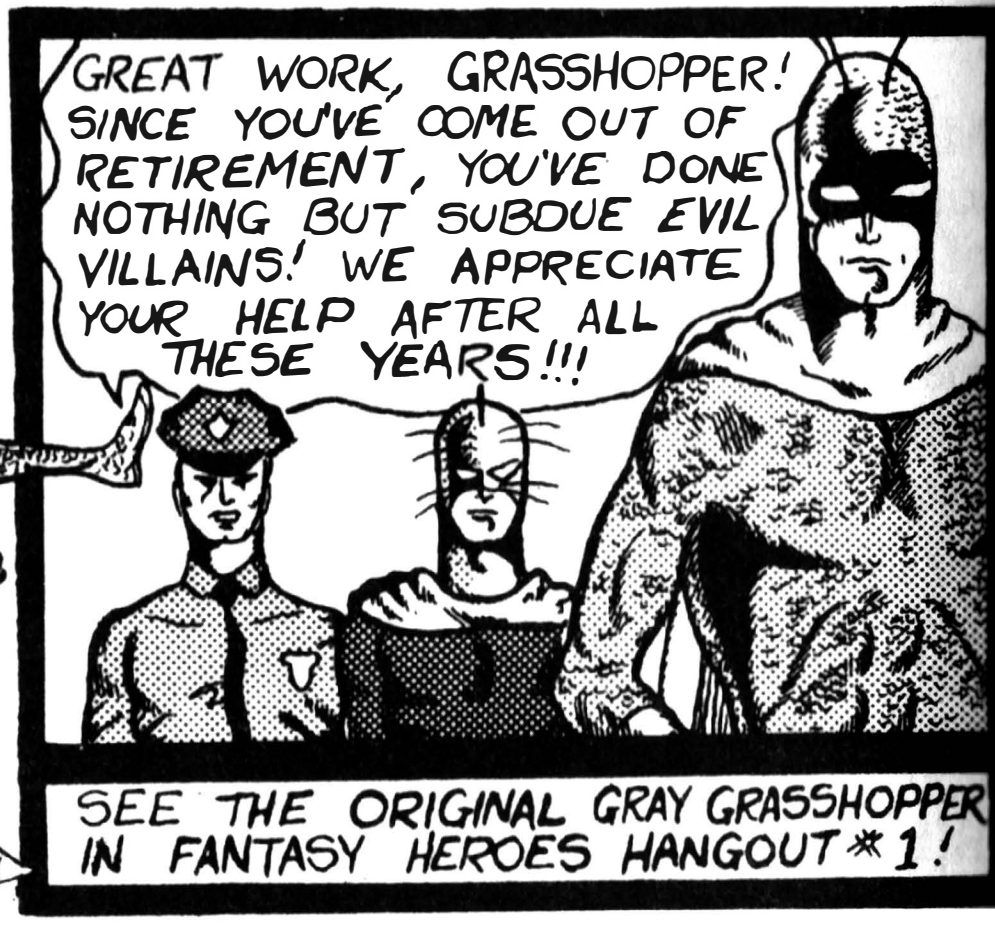
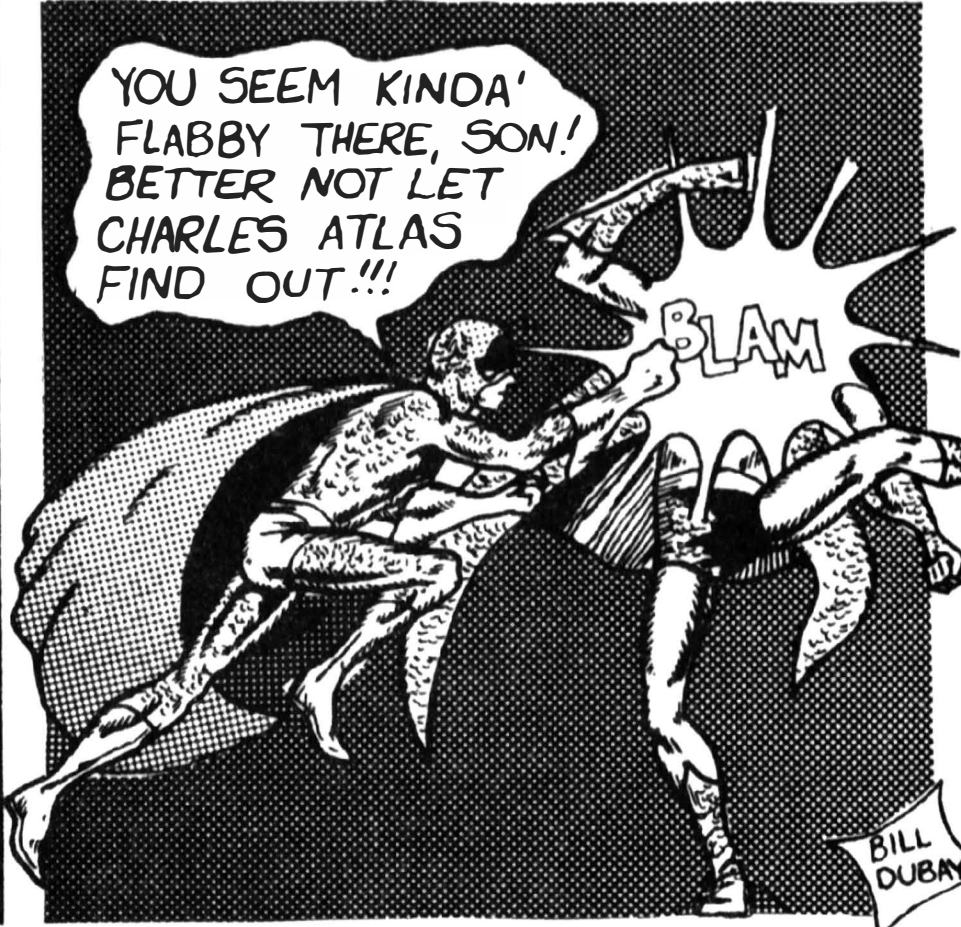
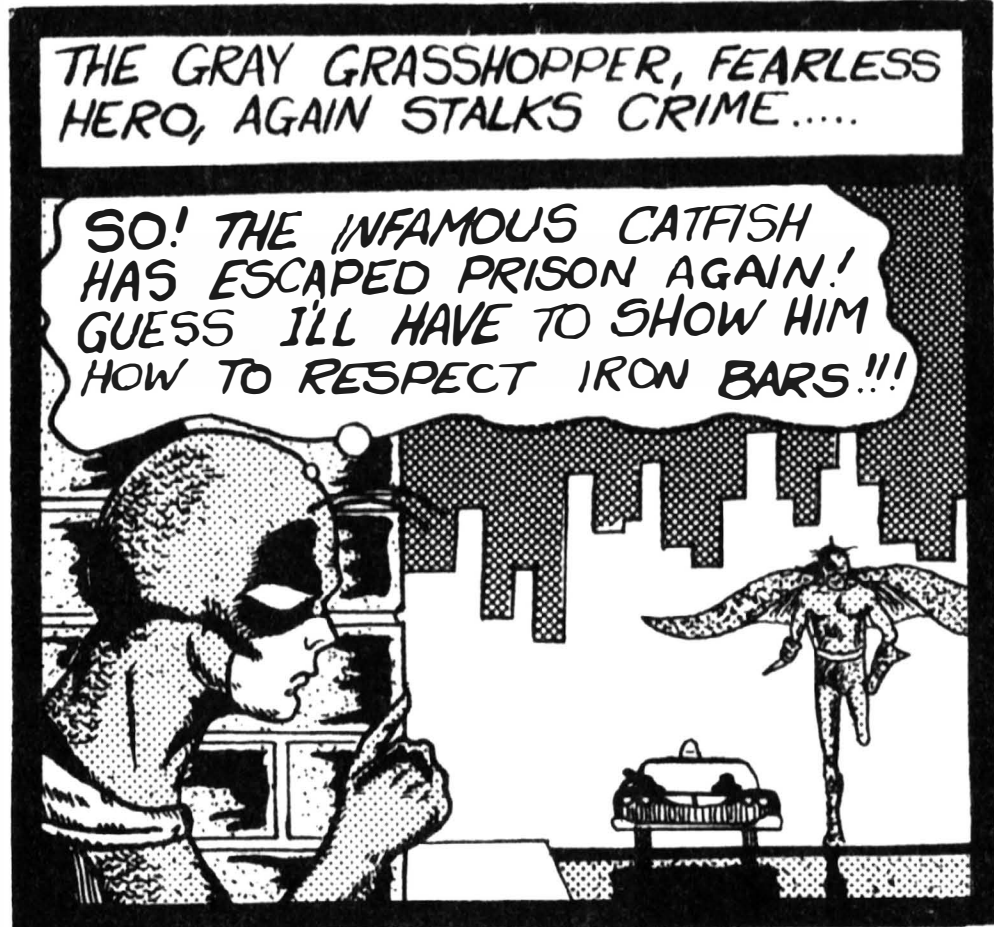
'the thinker!!'

## HEROES' HANGOUT

Another of Comicdom's finest fanzines devoted entirely to strip and article comic hero features. Regular features include art by the talented Roger Brand, and unmatchable Rudi Franke. Plus stories and articles by the world's finest writers. Always a fine blue printed cover by Rudi Franke. A comic collector's PRIZE fanzine!!!

Edited by Barry Bauman

and Rudi Franke!!!





MARTY: We're still talking about the first issue of *Fantasy Hero* here.

BILL: Exactly.

MARTY: Okay, let's just take the questions in sequence. "Bill, you had a very unique art style. Who were your influences? Did you take art in school?"

BILL: [laughs] No. We didn't have art classes at Sacred Heart. It was all college prep; hard-core math, Latin and bible study. I was just a very adept thief. I stole from Joe Kubert, Carmine Infantino, Steve Ditko, then finally progressed to Wally Wood.

MARTY: So the answer is, you never took an art class or went to art school. How did you develop your style, then? How did you become so good at drawing?

BILL: Thank you for the compliment. I never considered myself to be any good. I just keep working on learning how to draw...for about thirty years now. There have been times when I've actually had delusions of adequacy...but then I've come to my senses. Mostly, I just try to keep art fun.

MARTY: "Were there any local clubs where you would get together with other fans in the very early days before comicons?" The only thing that I can remember that kind of got me involved with other fans was the science fiction convention that was out here, probably in 1964...there were a lot of comic book people there, a lot of science fiction people there, there were a lot of people that we eventually got involved with. And it was kind of exciting because there was a buzz ... there was something going on. That's where we met Steve Perrin, if I'm not mistaken.

BILL: No, we actually met him after he bought a copy of that first fanzine. He was attending classes at San Francisco State and just called one day. We got on well, but he was on his way out of town...to some eastern college.

MARTY: This is in what year?

BILL: I'm remembering stories here. Leeway on the chronology.

MARTY: This was right after we started publishing?

BILL: Yeah. Sometime around then. I liked who he was, his ideas, the way he wrote. He knew stuff we didn't. Especially about Burroughs. He introduced us to some awesome artists. I wish he would've stuck around longer.

MARTY: We used to go out to S. F. State College to see the Captain Marvel serial.

BILL: Every week. One episode at a time. With every aspiring hippie in the city...and some awesome smokin' air. We were a couple of virgin Catholic school boys getting a preview of San Francisco's Summer of Love. [sigh] Not somethin' I'll forget.

MARTY: And I think we did that with Steve, he was kind of our hook to State College. That was probably in '64 or '65, if I'm not mistaken.

BILL: We did this all through high school, Marty. '63 through '66. We were *always* into something. Remember Roger Brand, Tom Conroy? Then there was the other side, John Belfi and Jack Burnley. [sigh] We lived some adventures.

MARTY: This leads to the next question: "How did you meet Rudi Franke and Barry Bauman? Who was the oldest, and youngest, of the Golden Gate four?"

BILL: Rudi was the oldest. You were the youngest. By days.

MARTY: Me, you and Barry were about the same age.

BILL: Rudi was a schoolteacher. Twenty-eight, twenty-nine...livin' across the Bay...a whole world away. All of us liked comics. They dug the value. We jizzed on the art. All of us liked basketball. They kicked ass. We loved to play.

MARTY: Yeah, but I think that was discovered afterwards. I think when *Heroes Hangout* #2 came out, we got in touch with them. We just arranged for a meeting. "Let's get together." Because we were in the same, uh ...line of work [laughs] And if I'm not mistaken, I think we hopped on a bus and went over to Oakland. It seemed like we went on this long voyage, and we got together with Rudi and Barry, and just marveled at their comic collections, because by that point, they had discovered that store...

BILL: Fort Knox.

MARTY: ...a goldmine of comics in a store up in Sacramento called the Liberty Book Store. They wound up making a fortune off of that stuff, or at least they had a big enough collection that they could eventually make a fortune off of it. One of the things that we wound up doing is playing basketball, so Bill and I would be the San Francisco guys against the Oakland guys. I think Bill and I would win most of those games.

BILL: I remember getting my butt kicked more often than not. [Laughs] Marty was Wilt the Stilt. I was a spastic Meadowlark Lemon. Those East Bay boys were playground sharks that could tear you up on the court.

MARTY: I think I was about six-one by then. Through those meetings, I would borrow comics from them, which would give me a reason to go over there, and we'd say, "Hey, how about producing something *together*?"

BILL: Rudi wanted to collaborate. I smelled Tom Sawyer karma, but, I still bit. He was a teacher, for God's sake. I was a Catholic school boy, pre-programmed for a positive response to authority figures. I acquiesced. We published a few things.

MARTY: I do remember that obviously you were writing and drawing, I was doing some writing... Rudi pretty much was drawing. What did Barry do?? [laughs] I don't recall Barry having a special talent, or actually even *wanting* to get involved in producing these things. He was always kind of on the side selling stuff, y'know? Or he had some little scam going on, am I right?



BILL: Barry was dealing. He dealt in the commodity of old comic books. And he was the best I've ever seen at it.

MARTY: It was weird. About three years ago, I ran into Barry Bauman down here on Clement Street in San Francisco, getting ready to audition for 'open mike' at a comedy club! The guy was a nice guy back then and all, but I don't remember him as being a card.

BILL: Barry was wry. I can see him doing stand-up. A second-string Lenny Bruce.

MARTY: As far as the publications go, I don't think he had much input. Maybe he did more for the *Heroes Hangout* stuff. He was there when we met, but...

BILL: Barry liked to see his name in print. And I think Rudy didn't like making that drive across the Bridge alone.

MARTY: I hope that answers your question there, Bill [Schelly]. Okay, "In 1964, you decided to merge *Fantasy Hero* and *Heroes Hangout*. Why?" Bill and I still wanted to continue publishing on our own, which we wound up doing with *Yancy Street Journal*. But we wanted to see what it would be like... I guess for me, what was exciting was the idea of having four people together, and kind of mix their

talents together. And I thought it was really exciting, and especially the idea of Rudi and Bill drawing something together, which in reality sort of turned out as kind of a disaster.

BILL: I wouldn't call it a disaster. It's an *interesting* memory.

MARTY: Your styles didn't really go that well together, but in theory I thought it was going to be really exciting, and it kind of was there for a while.

BILL: Rudi and Barry expanded our horizons in a lot of ways. Whole East Bay opened up to the Catholic boys. The people, the scents, the journey. We were exploring.

MARTY: Well, yeah. But I also thought that that came about by way of our getting our hands on all those other fanzine publications, and we could see how other people operated, and I think that's where we got some of our ideas.

BILL: Ideas were everywhere. We were growing.

MARTY: Pretty much. It was pretty contrived, I thought, but it was fun.

*Continued on 2<sup>nd</sup> page following*



# YANCY STREET JOURNAL

THE NEWSPAPER FOR MARVEL FANS

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 9

JULY 1965 ISSUE

PUBLISHED 7-12 TIMES YEARLY

## Meet WALLY wood



AS TOLD BY BILL DUBAY

Wallace Allan Wood, one of Marvel's latest and wisest additions to its staff, was born June 17, 1927 in Menahga, Minnesota. His father was a rugged lumberjack and his mother a school teacher. With an ancestry of Finn, Scotch, Irish, and five other nationalities, Wally is a brown-haired, blue-eyed gent standing approximately 6 feet in height. At one time or another he has lived in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. He has worked as a pin-boy, usher, dental lab assistant, pr-

Wood.

Wally's most memorable piece of work at EC was a story entitled "Bat Boy and Rubin" in MAD Comics #8. This was only one of Wally's famous satires on super heroes.



The illo to the left is a scene from Wally's dazzling Batman and Robin spoof in MAD Comics #8. Aside from his spectacular adventure strips, Wally's unmatched talent frequently 'dressed' the pages of EC's humor mags.

Wood was a member of the EC comic staff all throughout that company's prospering period of July-August 1950 (old trend) to December of 1955 (end of the new trend). During this time he did approximately 175 comic strips for EC alone! That's almost three strips per month...and when you can match quality along with quantity you know that's tremendous achievement. It more than proves that Wally Wood is a fast and prodigious worker!

With the downfall of EC Wally Wood became a free-lancing comic and magazine illustrator, that is until---1958 (Sept. 8th) when the

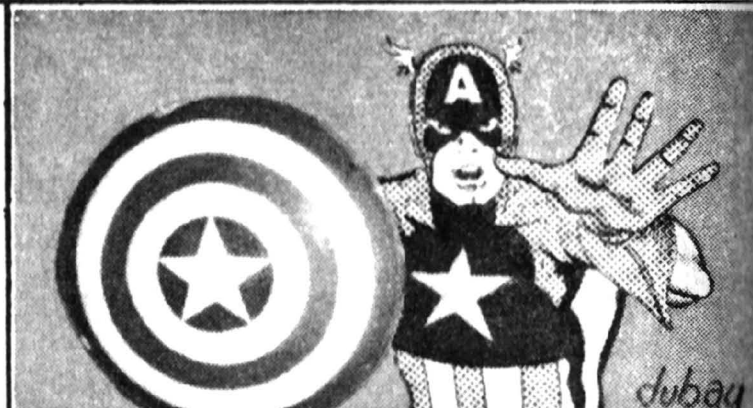
## THE Courageous Captain

-from the files of-  
- STEVE \* PERRIN -

--- PART V ---  
"WHERE DOES CAP  
GO FROM HERE?"



If this column sounds rather disjointed, it comes from having an editor breathing down one's back and a physical science final in the morning. Tension, tension.. Meantime, Cap has managed to come to a quick statis after my enthusiastic comments of the last issue. The cliffhanger proved to have a waiting net to catch our hero (Hell of a note if that's what saves Cap in AVENGERS #20) and the Captain and the Camp Followers are proceeding at a rather mundane pace, totally unlike the fast-paced, sometimes chaotic, high adventure of the previous group, who earned the name of the World's Mightiest Heroes. Currently, of course, Cap has devolved back into potting despicable villains in ten pages of inane action and insane situations. I may be doing Cap a disservice, as I have not seen TALES OF SUSPENSE #69 as yet, but somehow Cap charging into a Frankenstein-style castle (Frankenstein's monster was never in a castle in the original story, but Hollywood fouls everything up) especially with Daredevil doing the same thing with twenty pages to work in, sort of turns me off. Still, in the old days Cap did some of his best work in castles. Cap had more than ten pages to



sponsibility that keeps him with the Avengers much as Reed Richard must stay with the Fantastic Four. Now, of course, the members of the Justice League of America have no such problems. They can have entire books devoted to their own adventures and still be active members of the JLA. However, it is not a matter of time to be spent with the group and alone, but a matter of the continual continuation of the Marvel line, making it almost impossible to keep sequence between solo strip and group responsibilities. When you have the Avengers and THOR involved in two separate serials, the ramifications are too confusing, and you have to totally dissociate them. Cap is not dissociated, ergo, he is not, and will not, get his own strip.

To be a major Marvel character you have to be independent. Don't ever look for Daredevil or Spider-Man to become members of the Avengers, it will never happen. This of all the Marvel heroes as divisions in an army, with Stan Lee the general. One of the first rules of combat is to never split your forces if you can help it, makes for confusion. We've seen works, and Stan won't make the mistake again.





manufactured and printed in U.S.A.

# VOICE OF COMICDOM

COMICDOM'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

\*\*NUMBER FOUR\*\*

APRIL 1965

PUBLISHED IRREGULARLY

## Meet The Pro.



William Overgard, 38, one of the great cartoonists in the field earns his wages by illustrating for the World Telegram's popular comic strip, STEVE ROPER.

During World War II, Overgard was in a Navy Amphibian unit, seeing combat in the Pacific, and he used to toss out his government issue to load up with art supplies so he could practice. He even carried a T-Square on landing operations, drawing cowboy adventure strips while ignoring the excitement around him. He sent the strips to Milton Caniff and got encouragement and criticism.

After the war, he returned to his native Santa Monica, California, where he studies art. Then he went to New York and worked about three years for Biro-Woods, creating a strip called Black Diamond Western. He wrote and drew thirty pages a month. Later he worked for Dell Comics doing Jungle Jim, Ben Bowie and Steve Canyon. From then he went on to Steve Roper.

The most important influence in Bill's career has been Milton Caniff. He can not say enough about this remarkable man. When Bill was 12 he sent Milt a fan letter and a crude, little drawing. Bill received an encouraging reply from him. Thus began a correspondence that gave Bill Overgard the only real training he had in cartooning.



Bill Overgard's STEVE ROPER

"If you're really involved with girls, it shows in your work," Caniff said. Caniff is famous for his girls. Overgard also likes girls.

Overgard notes that Steve Roper isn't a new strip. The strip originally began back in 1936 as "The Great Gusto," a W.C. Fields type, written by Allen Saunders, who still writes the dialogue for Steve Roper. Later, the strip became "Big Chief Wahoo," after the Indian who sold Gusto's patent medicine.

But in the 1940's, with the advent of the popular adventure strips, Steve Roper took over. Gusto and Wahoo were eased out gradually, after Roper parachuted into an Indian reservation and from then on it was Steve's strip.

Overgard now works at night, as befits a man with a red beard and pinstripes, and days he tries to keep the old Overgard place going.

Bill is married to the former Gloria Backer, who used to be in ballet. They both have three lovely children—the oldest being 13. The Overgard domain is a eighteenth century house plotted on 18 acres of land in Stony Point, New York.

## Meet The Fans

A collection of the biggest 'Rogues Gallery' yet to appear in a comic fanzine! Thanks are extended to Mr. Jerry Bails, Fred Landesman and Dave Herring for these photographs!



(standing l to r) Chuck Moss, Don Glut, Jim Rossow, Bob Butts, Russ Keeler, Mike Touhey (foreground) Jerry Bails (kneeling over) and Alex Almaraz



Ronn Foss and Biljo White--Top Fan artists, looking for panels to 'swipe'

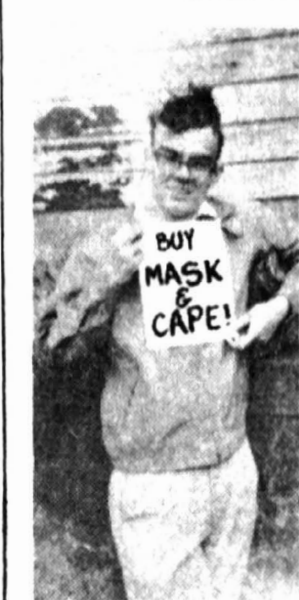


An Odd editor: Dave Herring



Rocketman Ronn Foss

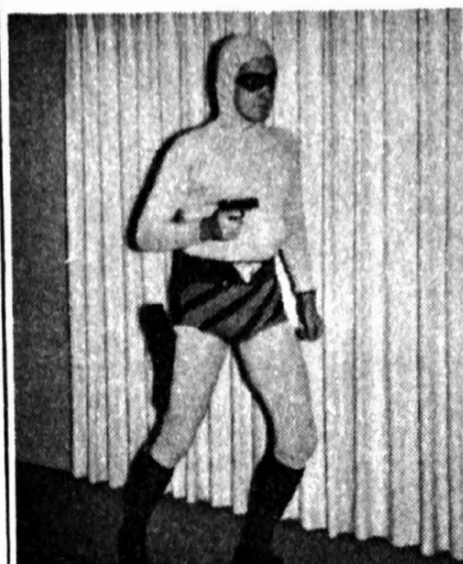
(below) DC Comics editor, Mort Weissenger



Steve Perrin



Glen Johnson, Dick Kyle, Rick Durell, John McGeehan, Bill Spicer, R. Manning



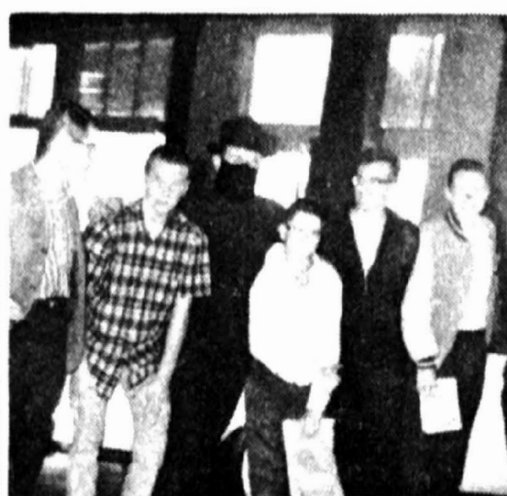
Fandom's Ghost Who Walks, Jerry G. Bails--Our leader!



Fred Landesman



John Chambers & Cat Manfredi



(l to r) Jeremy A. Barry, Barry Bauman, Rudolf (Green Hornet) W. Franke, Robert (Mighty Mouth) Q. Metz, Larry Ivie, and William B. (for brave) Dubay.



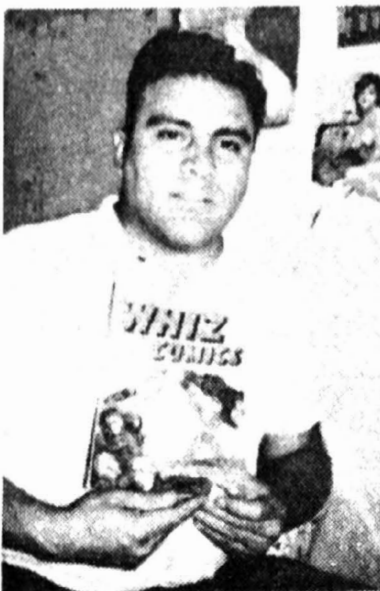
(l to r) Roy Thomas, Linda Rahm, Jerry and Sondra Bails, Bill and Ruth White.



Artist Larry Ivie doing his daily sock mending!



Sociable Steve Herring



Alex Almaraz and valuable Whiz #3

## Meet The Fan



### John Ryan

John Ryan is one of the very few foreign active comic fans associated with comic fandom. John hails from Fairfield, Australia where he enjoys the art of comic collecting very much. Mr. Ryan is 33 years of age, married, and works as a Production Planner for a rubber company.

John has been interested in comics for many years and recently has shown his interest by publishing his own A-1 fanzine, Down Under. John's taste in comics vary from brand to brand but he claims that comics containing art by Eisner, Caniff, Raymond, Wood and Manning are his most wanted specimens.

John officially entered Comicdom in 1962 when he was crowned 'Australia's first true comic fan associated with fandom'. John now is on the Executive Board of the Academy and is a member of Jerry Bails' K-Alpha.

## Kaler To Sponsor '65 N.Y. Comicon

1965 has all the symptoms of being a big year with a big FIRST for comic fandom. The first annual World Comic Convention will be held in New York City on the July 31st-August 1st weekend.

Unlike the last New York con in 1964, sponsored by Bernie Rubnis, which was supposedly a 'World Comic Convention', but with only a few eastern fans attending, the 1965 con has all the makings of a successful nation-wide fan meet.

Pro talks, movies, serials, auctions, and a costume ball will be only part of the program. Prizes will be given for the best costume. Fans are encouraged to dress not only as professional super-heroes, but amateur heroes as well.

Mr. David Kaler, well known member of Comicdom, and member of the Academy, has devoted his valuable time in the setting up of the first world comicon. He asks all those who plan to attend to drop him a line--and a check. The expense of the two day con will be \$5.00 per person (this does not include hotel-motel expenses or other items needed). This is payable in advance, preferably before April 1965, to cover the cost of the convention hall.

Living accomodation arrangements could be made with correspondences and attendees of the con who live in and around the New York, City. Mr. Kaler would be pleased to hear from parents in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut areas who could provide housing for teens during the two day con.

This first big comicon should help pave the way for semi-yearly District-cons. It is hoped that this will be the one big Comicdom project that all active fans will promote, support, and attend.

For more information concerning this convention, please contact:

Mr. David Kaler  
P.O. Box 392  
Cooper Station  
New York, New York 10003

Dave would very much like to hear from you. He will consider any ideas you may have to better the prospective program. The sooner you write, the sooner plans can be put into effect.

THE VOICE OF COMICDOM is published irregularly by the Golden Gate Publishers: 60 Gladys Street San Francisco, Calif. Price: 25¢ per copy; \$1.00 per 5 issues.



BILL: Fun.

MARTY: Okay, next question. "The newspaper format of *Voice of Comictim* and eventually *Yancy Street Journal* was unique. Who did the lay-outs and paste-ups?"

BILL: Look. I'm a Capricorn, a Catholic, first son of a first son from a long line of way-too-responsible Aristocratic French. The newspaper format looked clean, easy, do-able. And, it intrigued me. Printing cost us two and a half cents a copy. We charged fifty cents or so. It all made sense to me.

MARTY: I hadn't seen *Yancy Street Journal* for quite a while, but I thought that ...

BILL: Marty typed up every column of every page in every issue of the *Yancy Street Journal*. Lay-outs and designs are all his. He was particularly proud of the little *printer's bugs* that he put at the end of every article. He'd hunt new ones down as avidly as he hunted funnybooks.

MARTY: Really? I did the lay-outs on that?

BILL: Yes you did. I remember going to your place one day and you being so pleased with what you'd done. You'd seen me pasting up type and designing pages for years and here, finally, you'd done a whole page, all on your own. You were in blushing hog heaven.

MARTY: ...I'd leave block areas where you could drop in the drawing.

BILL: Wherever your article ended, that's where it ended, and I'd get a hole to fill.

MARTY: There was kind of a squared off look to the pages, and I would just leave an open, area, and say, "Bill? Do somethin' nice, y'know?" Or I may have had my own idea. I may have said, "I want a picture of Spider-Man, and he's gotta be hanging from a tree..." That sounds more like me.

BILL: You were pretty demanding. But, I usually had a good time working up your art. What I hated doing was typing and retyping those columns of type for *Voice of Comictim*. Remember that? We'd rework entire pages of type just so the columns were justified.

MARTY: Oh, man...

BILL: Nightmare!

MARTY: We had to count the spaces. Well, we were really concerned about the look of things, and we knew we were only going to do it once, and we wanted it *right*. Even though it didn't always look right, but ... dealing with ditto masters...

BILL: We're talking about *Voice of Comictim* and *Yancy*. No ditto masters by that point.

MARTY: Right, but when we were dealing with ditto masters, there were a lot of limitations, and we had to, at some point, give up. There were times when we'd be running the thing off, and the ditto master would start to split, and we'd start to pull our hair out, and we'd continue to print it, because no way in the world were we gonna re-do that.

BILL: Every page a work of original art, complete with all that typing.

MARTY: Which brings to mind that we did, eventually, buy a ditto machine. It was set up in my parents' garage, which became our publishing headquarters. Though in the very beginning, our writing and drawing was done at Bill's house from what I remember...which was only a few blocks away. After we were publishing about six or eight months, we bought a ditto machine. We started off with a mimeo machine, we had one in our possession.

BILL: I remember that. The baby mimeo. For postcards, matchbooks and fake IDs.

MARTY: Though I don't remember ever publishing anything on mimeo. But the ditto machine was in my parent's garage, or basement, and we spent a lot of time down there, just grinding it out, with reams and reams of paper.

BILL: The makeshift print shop dungeon.

MARTY: But as for the layouts on *Yancy Street Journal*, I did them, and for *Voice of Comictim*, most of the lay-outs were done by you, right?

BILL: Marty was into Marvel. My interests were more diverse.

MARTY: I guess we've answered his next question, "Was there a Golden Gate Features office?" At Bill's typewriter at his house, and I think after we got a ditto machine, I spent less time over at his house and did most of my writing at home, because I eventually got a clunker typewriter, an Underwood, of my own. Next question: "Did you four have regular Golden Gate meetings?"

BILL: Only on the basketball court.

MARTY: Most of them were over at the East Bay at Rudi's house. It was his parents' house. But it was comfortable because we could go in back in the shed and have our meetings.

BILL: I wouldn't call that comfort.

MARTY: Well, you could get away from other people. And there was also a basketball set-up right outside. "Did you live in close proximity so it was easy to get together?" Bill and I lived about five minutes away from each other. Bill on Chenery Street, three different locations on that street ... and I lived on a street called Gladys.

BILL: This in San Francisco's notorious Mission.

MARTY: "Any details on how you operated as a foursome would be appreciated." How did we do the production...?

BILL: Like Huck and the boys. We did the interviews, research, articles, art, design, layout, print production and fence painting. Rudy and Barry would ask us how it was coming. I remember one awful time when Marty diligently spent months reading, cataloging and writing this lengthy supposed-feature dissertation on the most horrible line of comics anyone had ever dredged from a newsstand...





From the "Picto-Editorial" by Bill DuBay in All-Stars! #1 (1965)

MARTY: It was Nedor Comics.

BILL: Rudi and Barry supplied you with the comics, hoping your article would make the books popular enough to dump on a hungry market. Didn't work.

MARTY: I figured that, since Rudi and Barry had almost the entire line of Nedor Comics, if there was ever anyone who was going to write a definitive retrospective history...

BILL: That you would even *attempt* to do such a thing astounds me to this day.

MARTY: We were pretty good about deadlines. We would set deadlines for ourselves, and we would say, we want to have this thing out by August, for example... and we were good at crunching it away, and staying up until all hours until it was done.

BILL: Discipline's one thing good Catholic boys're usually pretty righteous about. We're also pretty good at being suckered. Rudy and Barry, God love 'em...knew that.

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This is the end of the uninterrupted verbatim transcript. What follows are notes interspersed with direct quotes from the tape.

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BILL: I always liked Micky Martin. Last I heard he was a TV columnist for the Sacramento Bee and producing an annual book of movie reviews.

Steve Kelez also lived in the city for awhile. He was into films and old radio shows. Didn't he publish *The Gotham Gazette*, a sort of supplement to Biljo White's *Batmania*.

There was also a loud-mouthed midget nuisance named Bob Metz. Bill would have loved to strangle that kid. We knew him from Catholic school.

BILL: It was like we were on a perpetual scavenger hunt. There probably wasn't a day that Marty and I didn't venture out exploring. We were joined at the hip at that point.

MARTY: Our biggest find, which doesn't compare to Rudi and Barry's Liberty Book Store avalanche, was a store on 24th Street called Al Fry's Five-and-Dime. And Al hadn't been open in twenty-five years, but we used to always stare

in the window, and there was a little sign that said, "If you Need Assistance, Call Al in the Alley." So, we decided to call him. So we yelled, "Al!!!!" Fifteen minutes later, this old guy came down, and said "What do you want?" We asked if he had any comics. He said, "Oh, I think I've got a few. But you have to come back next week." To make a long story short, we wound up with about 100 copies of *Detective Comics* #59, at a price of two for a nickel! All in perfect *mint condition*!

BILL: We traded them for everything under the sun. Added some real gems to our collections.



Editor's Note: Marty was kind enough to let us reproduce Ditko's spectacular cover piece for All-Stars #1 from the original art—re-colored by our very own Nils Osmar.



MARTY: It was fun spending time hunting comics together, scouring through oh, about twenty bookstores.

BILL: We loved the medium, story and art—as well as the discovery of new/old material.

Larger print runs were the reason they went to photo offset printing. With ditto they could only do two or three hundred copies; all their offset publications, starting with *Voice of Comicdom* #2, were produced in runs of at least a thousand copies, and even more on later issues.

Comments on *All-Stars*, why they didn't do more. "*All-Stars* was the beginning of the end" as far as their interest. A lot of production delays soured them on publishing. Friend of Barry's was to do the printing, and ended up causing the fanzine to be about a year late.

MARTY: "Question: How did you manage to get Ditko to do that great front cover for *All-Stars*?" Steve Ditko was someone I was in touch with. We exchanged letters, and he was always happy to help us out.

In senior year, Bill went to another high school.[Balboa high school] He discovered girls. Marty was editor of the Sacred Heart high school newspaper. Marty was losing interest, it wasn't as much fun publishing the zines. Early 1966, Marty got involved in the SF music scene, and Bill got married [1967]. Once Bill left town, went in the army, Marty lost interest in comics fandom.

When Bill was discharged from the Army, where he edited the Ft. Bragg newspaper for two years, he returned to California, and entered college. Marty and Bill hooked up again to publish the short-lived *Bay Area Entertainer*, a local newspaper of movie reviews, interviews, record reviews, while both were maxing the journalism courses at separate colleges. They remained best friends the entire time.

Then Bill, who was free-lancing for Jim Warren's magazines, was offered a staff position in New York. He left California and worked as editor of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Vampirella*, *Rook*, *Goblin* and the *Warren Film Specials* for twelve years before again returning.

Marty opened, owned and operated a popular San Francisco record store, for 17 years. Collecting records replaced collecting comics. He founded 2 record labels and re-issued music from the 40s, 50s, 60s.

MARTY: Question: "What was your favorite of all the fanzines you guys did?"

BILL: I liked the *Yancy Street Journal*. I wasn't into Marvel, but you were... and your enthusiasm was always contagious. I liked that. I also liked the idea that you got your mother to do a lot of the grunt work.

MARTY: She was distribution manager, right?

BILL: And chief cook and bottle washer. You toed her line. And you published on *time*! All remembered fondly.

MARTY: I'd say that *YSJ* was my favorite... but I don't think it was necessarily the best thing that we put together. I always thought that *Fantasy Hero* had a lot of meat, you could read that thing for days. I think that was our best. That was catching what we did in our prime, you know? When we were *most* excited about publishing.

BILL: I enjoyed the *Voice of Comicdom*'s newspaper-style comic strips. Having Biljo White, Ronn Foss, Tom Conroy, and Roger Brand come together as contributors. I loved their work.

MARTY: But it didn't come out often enough. What did it come out, every six months?

BILL: My interests were...expanding at that time.

MARTY: If it was monthly, I could live with it, but it just didn't work that way.

BILL: People seemed to like it. It got a good reception. It wasn't criticized. And it was a prelude, of sorts, to our later collaborative newspaper work.

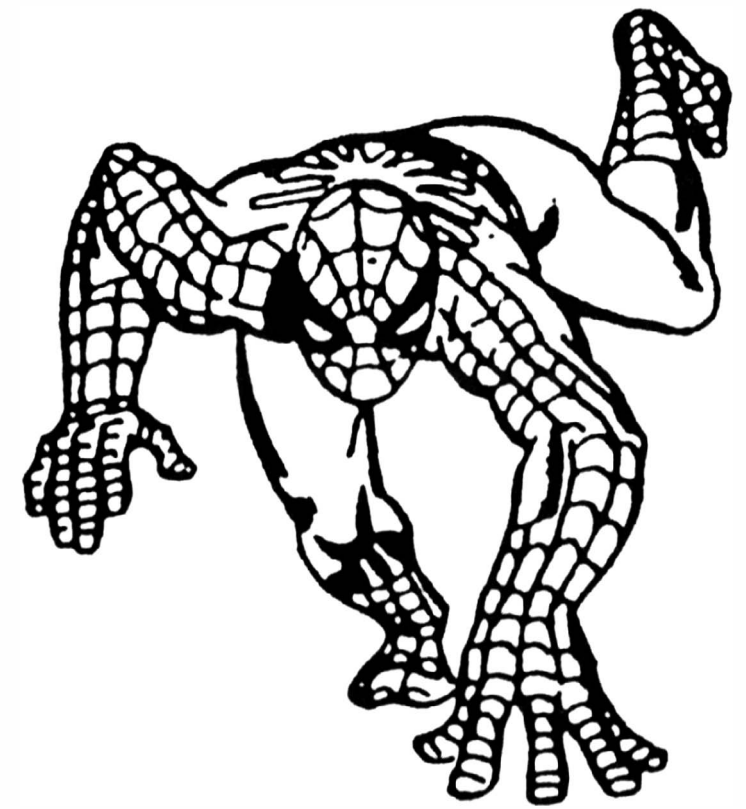
MARTY: Although I was proud of it all, I guess, I was especially proud of *Fantasy Heroes Hangout*. With the idea that we merged with these other guys to put this thing out, and that to me seemed really exciting.

BILL: Makes me wince. But the memories are nice.

MARTY: Yeah, it wasn't that good. But, just the idea that we merged talent, so to speak.

Another Bill Schelly question: "Is there anything you'd like to add about the feel or atmosphere of those old days of fandom?"

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BILL: It was punctuated with the sweet smell of innocence and naiveté. We were on a perpetual treasure hunt for old stories, artists, history. And we loved sharing that with each other.

MARTY: We never really collected because of value.

BILL: It was about discovery, art, history. And all of it awed us. Once I discovered comics, there was never any question about what I wanted to do with my life. While still in high school, I submitted to every publisher and eventually was assigned a script by the editor at Charlton. I was paid the grand sum of \$20 a page, plus \$2 for lettering. *Go-Go Comics*. 1966. Only lasted until my high school graduation because the Army took me. That's when Marty and I went our separate ways.

-end-

*Postscript: I also chatted with Barry Bauman around this time, though I didn't have the presence of mind to record that conversation. It's too bad because, a few years later, Barry was killed in an automobile accident.*

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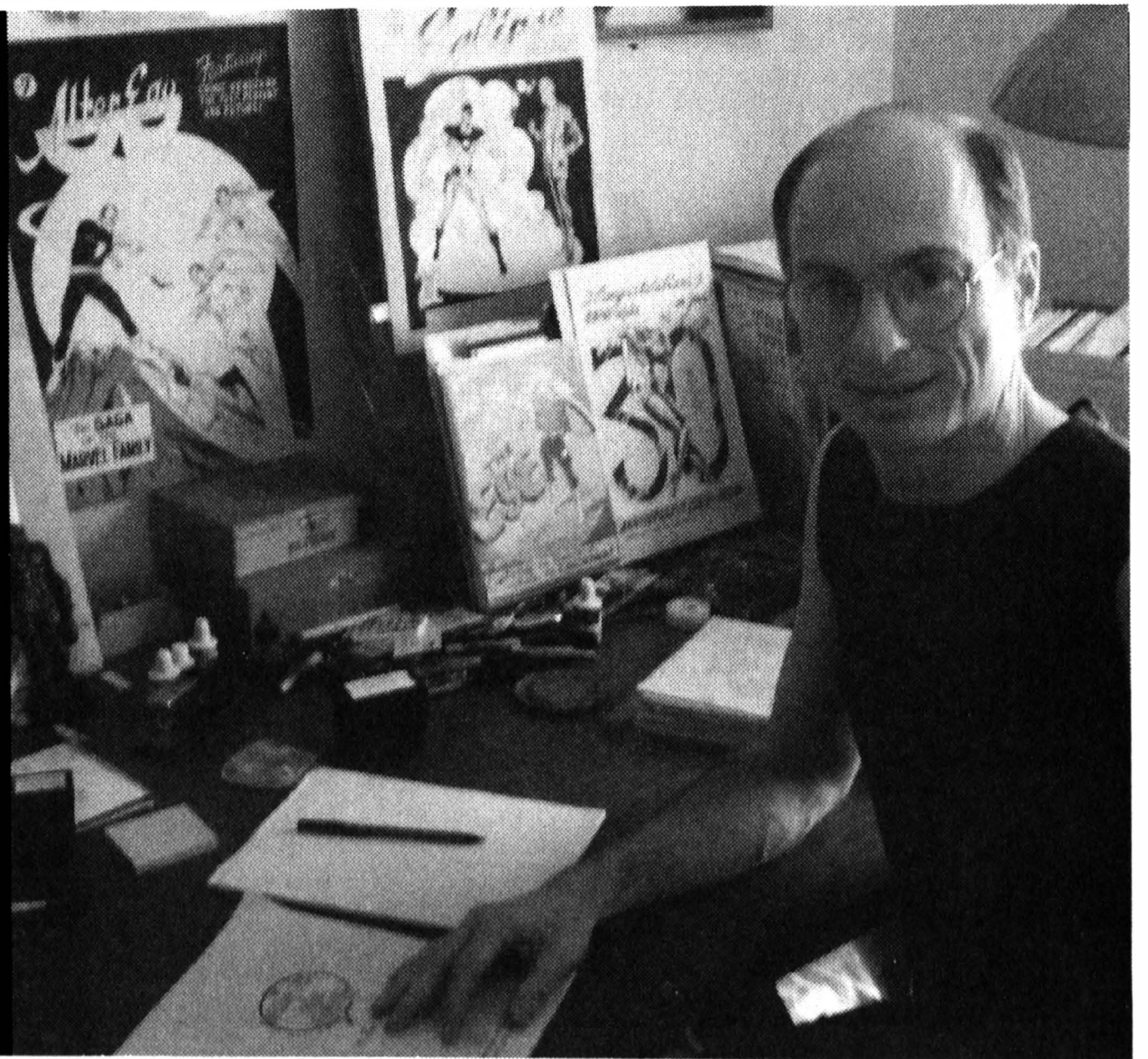
Reprinted from David Anthony Kraft's  
*Comics Interview* #146 (1995)

**ROY THOMAS**

**INTERVIEWS**

*Bill Schelly*

PHOTO: BETTINA BRADLEY



*Originally, this began as an interview with yours truly. Bill was finalizing his book on the history of comic fandom's first decade, and thought the readers of Comics Interview would be interested in my memories of those halcyon days—since I had been editor-publisher of Alter Ego, one of the better-known fanzines of the day. I told him that I'd already been interviewed at length in a prior issue of CI, and doubted if the regular readers wanted to go over the same ground with me again.*

*It suddenly occurred to me that Bill would make a worthy interview subject in his own right. Having previewed his manuscript, and been tapped to do an introduction for that selfsame book, I found him to be a knowledgeable, conscientious researcher who seemed to have an obsession with those early, developmental days of comicdom. Though taken slightly aback by my offer to interview him, on the genesis of his book and other related subjects, Schelly agreed—but only if I agreed to jump in here and there with my own thoughts. With that, we were off and running....*

Roy: *How did you decide to write a book on the history of comic fandom?*

Bill: Because I'm fascinated with how this whole phenomenon got started. It actually hit me as I was just drifting around the floor of the Exhibition Hall at the San Diego Comicon several years ago. The convention has gotten so huge, and there were throngs of people swarming around, and hi-tech displays and such. It suddenly hit me how far comic fandom has come, from its modest origins.

Roy: *The origin of comics fandom isn't exactly common knowledge.*

Bill: Exactly. If someone was curious how it got started, where would they go? Every year, Overstreet's *Comic Book Price Guide* runs the same short summary, about a page, but that's all. Someone once said, writers write the books they would like to read. That's

basically what happened. I got a little curious, and started interviewing old time fans, and the more I learned the hungrier I got for more information. Before I knew it, I was writing a book.

One of the first things I did was package up some of my interviews for a column in *Comics Buyer's Guide* called "Fandom's Founders," but it always seemed to be squeezed out. This was in 1992. Don and Maggie Thompson were enthusiastic about the series, but it only appeared three times. Jeff Gelb and I interviewed Jerry Bails, Biljo White, Ronn Foss, Grass Green, Raymond Miller, Howard Keltner and others. That was the beginning of my research.

Roy: *When did you first get involved with comics fandom?*

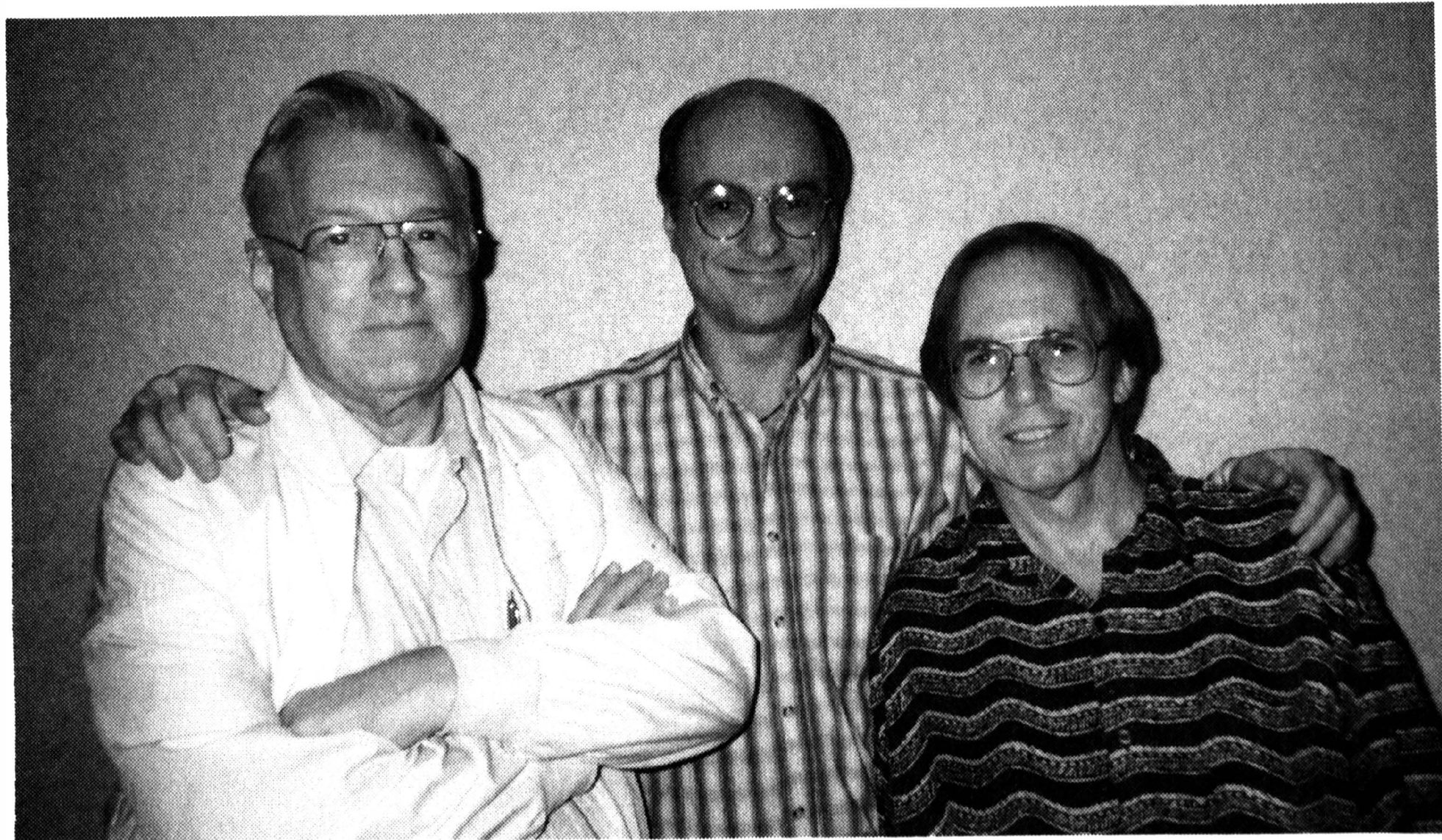
Bill: Around July 1964, I bought *Justice League of America* #30, which was the second part of the "Crisis on

Earth Three" story. In the letter column, Julius Schwartz plugged G. B. Love's *Rocket's Blast-Comickollector*, which was the premiere ad-zine of the 1960s. When I received my first copy, I couldn't believe my eyes! Here was a magazine full of ads for old comics, asking what I thought were astronomical prices. You know, like \$3.00 for *Captain America* #8, really out of sight. [laughs] I was hooked.

Roy: *Everyone thought those prices were just outrageous.*

Bill: Yes, yes. I remember showing them to my Dad, and he just shook his head. He couldn't believe anyone would ask as much as \$5.00 for a comic book. And he was a stamp collector. He should have understood. Even comics fans were just *beginning* to understand that these comics were rare, and worth money. They were Americana. The search for back issues





Jerry Bails, Bill Schelly and Roy Thomas pose for a photo by Dann Thomas, The night before the 1997 Comic Fandom Reunion in Chicago.

of old comics was one of the main energizing factors that got comic fandom started.

Roy: *In one of our letters, you mentioned publishing your own fanzines back then. When did that get started?*

Bill: About two weeks after I saw my first fanzine, I got bitten by the publishing bug. My best friend's father worked in an office with a Xerox machine, so we enlisted him to be our printer. In February 1965 the first issue of *Super Heroes Anonymous* rolled off the presses. It was pretty bad, but what do you expect from a couple of twelve-year-olds? It was so much fun, plotting how we were going to take fandom by storm. I'll never forget my excitement when I saw our first full page add in *RB-CC*. *Super Heroes Anonymous* was a crud-zine, pure and simple ... but there we were, right next to ads for great fanzines like *Star-Studded Comics*, and *Masquerader*, and *Alter Ego*.

Later on, after I grew up a little, I published *Sense of Wonder*, which ran twelve issues, until 1972. If anyone remembers me, it's probably because of *Sense of Wonder*. My claim to fame is that I published the first really extensive articles on Will Eisner in 1971. But I was never a Big Name Fan like you. I looked up to people like Jerry Bails, and Ronn Foss, and Don Thompson. I feel really fortunate to have been around to read all the classic fanzines as they were originally

published, and be a part of it all—if only a small part.

Roy: *Why did you call your book The Golden Age of Comic Fandom?*

Bill: I draw a parallel between what comics' Golden Age gave to the field, and the legacy that was created by comic fandom in its infancy.

Roy: *By infancy, what years are we talking about?*

Bill: From roughly 1961 to 1972. That's the period I call comicdom's Golden Age. It was a time when all the foundations ... the institutions, you might say ... were established. Fanzines devoted exclusively to costumed heroes, comicons, the amateur comic strips, and of course price guides.

Roy: *You cited 1961 as its beginning, which stands out in my mind because that was the year that Jerry put out Alter-Ego #1, with a little help from me.*

Bill: Without a doubt, the publication of *Alter-Ego* #1 in March of 1961 is an important benchmark in the history of comicdom. It was the first fanzine to catch the wave of interest in DC's Silver Age revivals, and it came along just at the right time to unify both old time comic fans and younger baby boomers who were discovering *The Flash* and *JLA* and other exciting comics coming out of Schwartz' stable.

Roy: *What about comics fanzines before Alter-Ego?*

Bill: Labeling something a benchmark, or a first, is a tricky business. It's like when people start tracing the history of comic art, or sequential art. It goes back to the cave paintings at Lascaux [France]! And if you say that, there's going to be someone who'll say, "But what about the *earlier* cave paintings?" There *were* comic fanzines before *Alter-Ego*, certainly. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were putting together a little zine reproduced with carbon paper called *Cosmic Stories* around 1930. And there were others, like Malcolm Willits' *Comic Collector's News* in the late 1940s, and Ted White's *The Facts About Superman* in 1952. But, I wanted to write about the history of comic *fandom*, specifically super-hero comic fandom, and in my opinion it didn't really get started until you and Jerry [Bails] put out *Alter-Ego*.

Roy: *As I recall, Jerry hadn't been exposed to fanzines until Julie Schwartz showed him Dick Lupoff's Xero, a science fiction fanzine that ran occasional articles about comic books.*

Bill: The "All In Color For A Dime" feature in *Xero* made a big impact, but in examining the correspondence that Jerry provided, and doing a lot of other checking and cross-checking, I came to the conclusion that Jerry hadn't even heard the word fanzine until he visited Schwartz early in 1961.

Roy: *I know I hadn't, until I think Jerry loaned me some of the Xero's by way of Julie.*

Bill: Like I was saying, the point isn't whether there were fanzines, or comic fanzines before *Alter-Ego*. It's clearly demonstrable that *A-E* was the rallying point that brought comic book fans out of the woodwork to form the nucleus of a fandom just for comic fans. Jerry was a dynamo of energy in those days, and he can't be given enough credit for getting the ball rolling. *Alter-Ego* led directly to *The Comicollector* and *The Comic Reader* [originally *On The Drawing Board*], the first advertising-zine and news-zine specifically for fans of comic art.



Roy: *Of course, there was EC fandom in the middle 1950s.*

Bill: Yes, and I have to thank John Benson, who published the legendary EC fanzine, *Squa Tront*, for teaching me a lot about EC fandom. I used to think that after the EC comics died, after the Comics Code Authority was established, that EC fandom totally died away. Most of the major fanzines like *The EC Fan Bulletin*, *Fantasy-Comics* and *Hoohah!* were at least started before Bill Gaines' line of comics died. What I didn't know, till John clued me in, was that any number of similar fanzines were published from 1957 to 1961 in what was really a continuation of EC fandom. Robert and Charles Crumb published three issues of *Foo!*, which was a photo-offset collection of their strips and cartoons, in 1958.

Roy: *I'll bet those are collector's items.*

Bill: They're incredibly rare. I included some reproductions from *Foo!* in my book, though I wish I'd had room to run more.

Roy: *Lots of examples of the fanzine covers and other art are an important part of your book.*

Bill: They're essential, because those fanzines are so hard to find. I crammed as much artwork in as I could, and a lot of photographs too. Being comic fans, we're all so visually oriented.

Roy: *How many fanzines do you own?*

Bill: Not as many as you might think. I have about 800 fanzines, but at least a hundred of them are actually photocopies. [Note: I continued adding to my fanzine collection after this interview, and in 2001 owned around 1,800 zines.]

Roy: *How did you get your hands on that many?*

Bill: I'd saved a few from my own period of activity in comicdom, which started in 1964. But I stupidly sold most of my original collection in the early 1970s. When I started working on this book, I got in touch with Ronn Foss, one of the Big Name Fans of the

1960s, and Ronn was kind of enough to loan me some of those great oldies.

Roy: *Where is Ronn these days?*

Bill: He's living in the Missouri Ozarks. He's got a cabin there, and owns about twenty acres. You know, he was sort of a country boy, though he cultivated that image of "What Kind of Man Reads Playboy" with the pipe and all. When he heard from me, he wrote me this incredible 32-page letter. It just went on and on. That letter was a tremendous inspiration.

When I began researching fan history in earnest, I started the Comic Fandom Archive, and have been receiving donations of fanzines and other material from lots of old-time fans.

Roy: *They give you the stuff?*

Bill: Yes. Not all of them, but some of them are getting older, and want to make sure their fanzines, and other memorabilia from that era, don't get thrown out by relatives who don't value the stuff. And I've got the Archive set up so that the material will all, eventually go to the Michigan State University special collection of comic art. It got started when Foss donated a stack of fanzines to the cause. Then Jerry Bails saw some of my recent publications, and sent me his *entire* fanzine collection, some on loan and some as donations to the Archive. Plus, I've picked up a lot of fanzines at comicons or through the mail. There were about 2,000 comics fanzines published in the 1960s.

Roy: *How did you arrive at that figure?*

Bill: John and Tom McGeehan bought multiples of just about every fanzine back then. They called themselves the "House of Info," and used to published all kinds of checklists and such. At the end of the decade when they counted them up, there were something like 2,700 different issues. Based on their description, and my correspondence with Tom recently, I figure about 700 of those were about other fields like Burroughs, or movie serials, or science fiction. I've been fortunate to accumulate complete runs of *Alter Ego*, *Comic Art*, *Xero*, *Star-Studded Comics*, *Fantasy Illustrated* and just

about all the *ROCKET'S BLAST-COMICCOLLECTOR* [RB-CC] issues. So I had plenty of material to research the history of comic fandom.

Roy: *What's been your biggest challenge?*

Bill: Besides coordinating all the information? I guess the hardest part has been tracking down all the old-time fans, and getting them to trust me enough to allow me to interview them.

Roy: *Did you do a lot of interviews for The Golden Age of Comic Fandom?*

Bill: Lots. Around a hundred. Folks like Bill Spicer, Marty Arbunich, Bill DuBay, Bill Thailing, Don and Maggie Thompson, Gary Groth. At first it was kind of intimidating.

Roy: *Why?*

Bill: [laughs] Well... for one thing, I'm kind of in awe of fans like Bill Thailing, Sam Moskowitz, Malcolm Willits and so on. Plus, if you're going to interview those folks, you better know your material. It's insulting to them if you haven't done your research. So it took a lot of preparation. I remember, just before I spent a couple of hours talking to Dick and Pat Lupoff, I was pretty nervous. I didn't know that much at the time about sf fandom, so I was worried I'd make a fool out of myself, but they couldn't have been nicer and... what's the word? Disarming? I learned so many things about sf fandom and the period leading up to *Alter Ego*. And, I have you to thank for loaning me your complete bound set of *Xero*.

Roy: *That was a gift from Dick. Those are some of my most prized fanzines. I think the "All In Color For A Dime" articles by the likes of Lupoff, Ted White, Jim Harmon, and Don Thompson had a tremendous influence on my fan writing after that. That brings up a likely question, Bill. What was your favorite fanzine from the 1960s?*

Bill: Hm. That's a tough one. Narrowing it down to just one is impossible. There's a number of them, for different reasons. I really dug *Star-Studded Comics*, especially for the Human Cat strips by Grass Green,



which were amazing. *Batmania*, because of that great mimeo printing and articles on the Caped Crusader, who has always been my favorite costumed character. The one that impressed me the most was always Bill Spicer's *Fantasy Illustrated*, and later *Graphic Story Magazine*. He had so many fantastic artists doing strips for him, especially a guy named Landon Chesney. Do you remember him?

Roy: *Sure. His stuff always had an EC-type flavor.*

Bill: One strip in particular. "The Life Battery," which Spicer adapted from a story by Otto Binder. [*Fantasy Illustrated* #2, June 1964.] When I first saw the opening page, with that incredible detail, my jaw fell open. I've been a Chesney fan every since. I still have to shake myself to realize that Spicer sent me Chesney's roughs and preparatory sketches for "The Life Battery" for the Archive. I just got chills up and down my spine as I looked through them. His "Misbourne and the Master" strips in *FI* #5 and 6

are great, too. Chesney helped a lot with my book, and I now consider him a friend.

Roy: *Any other favorite fanzines?*

Bill: I hope you don't mind if I include *Alter Ego* in my pantheon...

Roy: [laughs] *Mind? I don't think so...*

Bill: It's true, and not just your issues. Jerry put out a good fanzine, but I always thought that Ronn Foss raised it to another level when he took over with *AE* #5. For one thing, his Eclipse origin strip will always rank as a true fan classic. In retrospect, I'm glad that Julie nixed his and Dru Moroz' desire to update Dr. Mid-Nite, forcing them to come up with their own variation. Ronn was always so great with character names. A lot of them are so catchy they've become car-names! Eclipse ... Viper ... Excel.

Good as Jerry's and Ronn's issues were, your *Alter Ego* #7 through 9 are, to my mind, the quintessential photo-offset fanzines. Your "One Man's

Family" article on the Marvel Family in #7 was responsible for turning me on to those great old Fawcett comics. C. C. Beck became one of my all-time favorite artists. I collected Fawcett comics for quite a while, and still have a few special issues.

One thing about your issues of *Alter Ego* that really helped was having Biljo White on board as Art Editor.

Roy: *I couldn't agree more. You know, I had to kind of push Biljo to do some of that art, because he had so many other irons in the fire. Especially for Alter Ego #9, my last issue.*

Bill: Biljo did so much artwork, he was probably feeling overworked at the time.

Roy: *I used to give him specific assignments, like 'We need a big picture of Blackhawk and three smaller spot illustrations,' and I think maybe it just got to be work for him, instead of fun.*

Bill: Plus, 1965 was when *Batmania* took off, and he had his hands full with that. It was printed by mimeograph, which he had to print and collate by hand. That's one thing fans might not realize, but all those ditto and mimeo fanzines had to be hand-assembled. When you have a circulation of 500 or 600 copies like *Batmania*, it was back-breaking! I don't know if anyone would be willing to go through all that, today.

Roy: *I assembled Alter Ego #8 by hand. And hand-stapled it, too.*

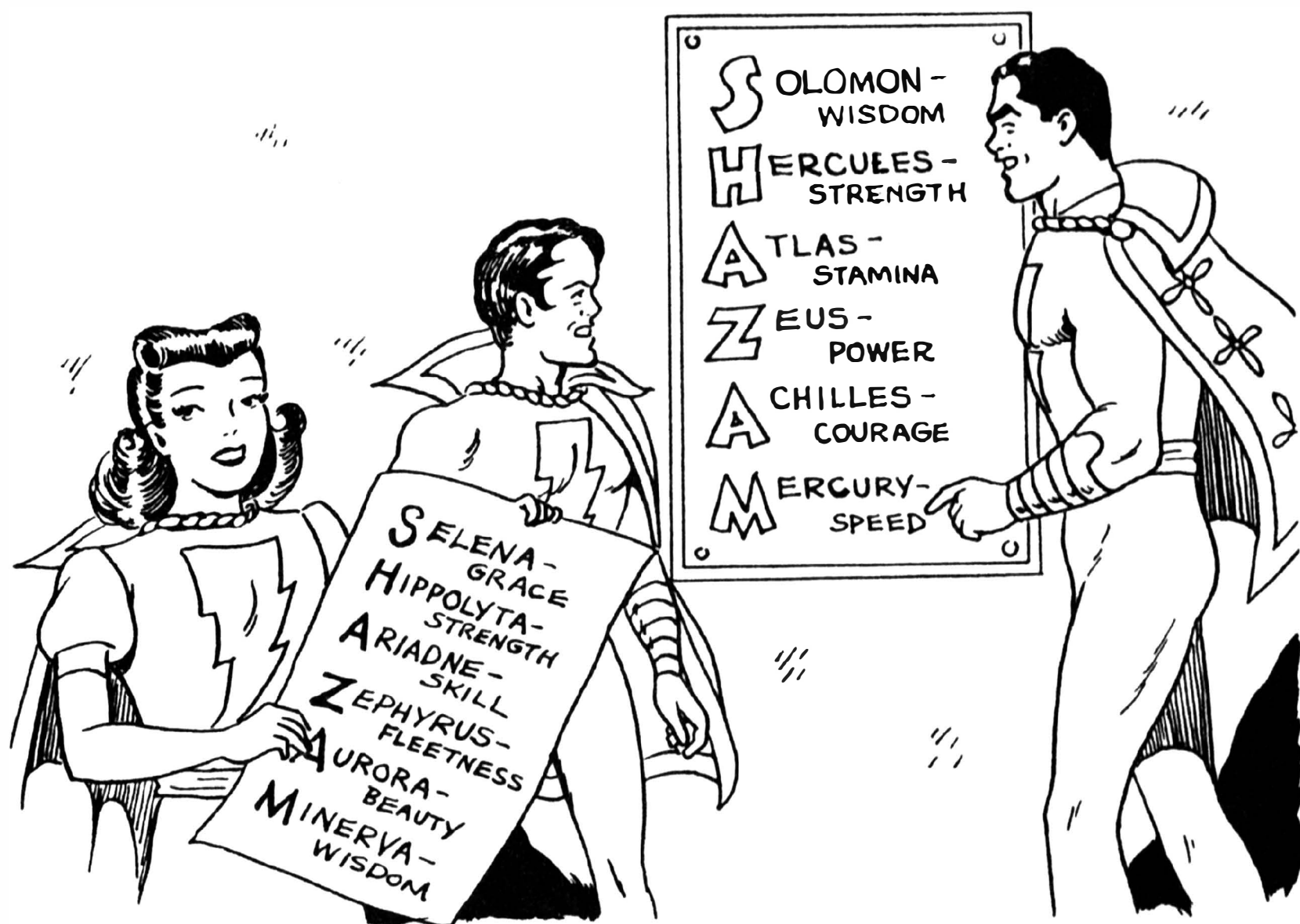
Bill: You're kidding! There were, what, 1000 copies printed?

Roy: *1000, maybe 1500.*

Bill: Were you nuts? Why didn't you have the printer do it?

Roy: [laughs] *Probably I wanted to save money. I can't remember now.*

Bill: A lot of fans worked hard to make comic fandom into something. My theory is that the older fans had waited for a long time for something like comicdom, and were so grateful that it even existed, that they would do



# One Man's Family

## THE SAGA OF THE MIGHTY MARVELS

by ROY THOMAS  
Illustrated by BILJO WHITE



just about anything to keep it going strong.

Roy: *How did comicons get started?*

Bill: At first, comic fans would get together at the sf World Cons, like the one in Pittsburgh in 1960 or Chicago in 1962. They made their presence known in the costume competitions. Dick and Pat Lupoff made quite a sensation with their appearance as Captain and Mary Marvel in 1960. A bunch of sf fans came as the Justice Society of America to the ChiCon in 1962. In the Huckster Room, as sf fans called it ... one could find a certain amount of old comics, especially ECs and Avons, among the sf and pulp magazines that were for sale.

The first regional meeting exclusively for comic book fans took place at [Jerry] Bails' home in Detroit. That was in March of 1964. He invited fans to help him tally the 1963 Alley Award ballots. Your idea of having fandom give awards each year to pro comics they especially liked really caught on.

Roy: *It started when I was writing an article for Alter Ego on my top ten comics. It just occurred to me that it would be better to get all fans' views, rather than just my own. Of course, there were also categories for amateurs, like "Favorite Fanzine," that sort of thing.*

Bill: The Alley Awards grew ... from ten categories in 1961 to dozens by 1964. Jerry had something like 250 ballots, and he wanted help in toting them up. Nineteen fans spent the weekend at Jerry's house. Don and Maggie Thompson drove up from Cleveland, Don Glut from Chicago, Chuck Moss from Nebraska, and others like Ronn Foss and Grass Green came from neighboring states.

One thing struck me, as I was researching the Alley Tally Party, was how this meeting in early 1964 had a lot of elements of a comicon. Trading and selling ... a display of original art ... overnight accommodations ... even a masquerade. Ronn Foss made a cool surprise appearance in a Rocketman costume that he'd made.

That same spring in 1964, Detroit fans Dave Szurek and Bob Brosch organized a gathering of about seventy fans at a local hotel. But the 1964 New York Comicon put on my Bernie Bubnis has traditionally been recognized as the first real comicon.

Roy: *Because it was in New York ...?*

Bill: Probably because of the pros that attended. There were three people from Marvel there, including Steve Ditko. And Tom Gill, the Lone Ranger artist for Gold Key, gave a talk. Also, a lot of well known dealers came to the New York meet, like Claude Held, Malcolm Willits, Don Foote, Phil Seuling and Howard Rogofsky. Some didn't bring any comics, though. They weren't sure if it would be worth it! Rogofsky only brought his price list.

Roy: *Rogofsky's prices, if I recall, were always the highest.*

Bill: The funny thing about his lists was his refusal to grade comics specifically. The list just had a comment at the beginning, saying that all comics were in very good to mint condition.



David Kaler

Roy: *Getting back to the comicons, I know my old friend Dave Kaler followed up in New York with cons over the next several years.*

Bill: Yes, yes. Kaler got a lot of pros in attend in 1965, and also ran the cons in 1966 and 1967. It wasn't until 1968 that Phil Seuling took over, with Kaler's blessing. In 1968, there were over 700 fans, which was just a staggering number at the time. In 1968 and 1969, comicons really took off, not just in New York but across the country. Then Shel Dorf, who had been behind the Detroit Triple Fan Fairs starting in 1965, organized a con in San Diego in 1970. He told me he was bored and just wanted something to do. And today the San Diego con is, well ... mammoth!

Roy: *When did it become apparent that comics fandom wouldn't peter out?*

Bill: I'd say in 1965, when Kaler was able to convince a lot of pros to attend the New York comicon. This was an incredibly important development. 1965 really was the year it all came together. This was symbolized when Bill Spicer [now a letterer on *Concrete*] published *The Guidebook to Comics Fandom* under the auspices of Bails and the Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors. A lot of the prefatory material in the *Guidebook* was picked up by Bob Overstreet for the *Comic Book Price Guide* in 1970. The original *Guidebook* had a grading guide, a list of important comics from the 1940s, and ads from prominent fanzines and dealers. It was designed to introduce fandom to newcomers. To explain how it worked ... what comic book collectors did, so to speak. The assumption was that pro comics would plug the *Guidebook* and this would enlarge fandom. That part didn't happen. I think Julie [Schwartz] and other editors probably felt it was apparent that fandom was thriving, and didn't need a lot of plugs. Most of the fanzine plugs in pro comics, like in *JLA* #30, were in 1963 and 1964.



Roy: *I recall 1965 as a year when fandom got quite a bit of publicity, in Newsweek for instance.*

Bill: In 1965 and 1966, the media discovered comic fandom. There were literally hundreds of articles in newspapers around the country and even overseas about this so-called cult of comic book collectors. Usually, the focus of the articles was about how much money those old funny books were worth. The idea that a comic book could be worth, you know ... a hundred bucks, it just blew peoples' minds! It's hard to imagine, but in 1965 you could get a nice copy of *Superman* #1 for fifty or sixty dollars.

Shel Dorf and Jerry Bails were interviewed a lot for these articles, and they tried to get the point across that comic strips and books were more than commodities, that they were an art form worth of serious study. The fact that Jerry had a Ph.D. and was an Assistant Professor of Natural Science at Wayne State University in Michigan always made good copy. That *Newsweek* article, "Superfans and Batmaniacs" on February 15, 1965, brought national attention to fandom.

Roy: *1965 was also the year that super hero comics were proliferating like mad.*

Bill: Right. You'd go to the newsstand and see new titles almost every week. It seemed like everyone was jumping on the super hero bandwagon, from Harvey to Archie Publications. Jim Warren's *Creepy* made the scene that year, and so did Tower Comics with *Thunder Agents*.

Roy: *I remember seeing Wally Wood's original artwork for Tower on his drawing board in July of 1965, months before it appeared.*



Bill: *Thunder Agents* #1 came out at the end of 1965. With the super hero boom, pro comics were beginning to look for new talent, and were aware of fandom as a potential source.

Roy: *Yeah. 1965 marked a real turning point for me. I worked for Charlton, DC and Marvel all in the space of one year, albeit briefly for the first two.*

Bill: You lasted at DC about a week.

Roy: *Right. I didn't care much for [Mort] Weisinger's methods. Then I got a call from Stan Lee. But I don't want to scoop your book. The whole story's in there.*

Bill: Before 1965, it was almost like there was an invisible barrier between fandom and the pro arena. Lots of fans, like Ronn Foss, submitted samples to the pro companies but didn't get any nibbles. Julie and Stan didn't seem interested. But when you broke in, there was kind of a gradual thaw. After that, a few more fans started to break into the pro ranks.

Roy: *Dave Kaler and Tom Fagan sold to Charlton right after me. Dan Adkins, who was a long-time sf fan, began doing lots of art for Marvel shortly thereafter. He'd already been working for Wally on Thunder Agents, of course.*

Bill: Not to mention people like Jim Starlin, Bernie Wrightson, Rich Buckler and others by the beginning of the 1970s. Comic fandom served as a training ground for the pros who would become major forces in the comics industry in the 1970s. Let's not forget that one of the most important comic book events of the 1970s was your *Conan the Barbarian* comic book, with art by Barry Windsor-Smith. Then there was Mike Kaluta on *The Shadow* ... and, the list goes on and on.

That's one of the main reasons I wanted to write this book. If you know how to look, if you have the proper background, you can see the fingerprints of old-time fans all over the shape of comic fandom today. The pros, the comicons, even the direct market itself. Phil Seuling, its chief architect, was a very active fan in the 1960s. People should know these things. At least in my view, our shared history is important. It's where our hobby world came from. It shouldn't be lost.

Roy: *You cite 1972 as the end of comicdom's Golden Age. Why 1972?*

Bill: That's the year that *Star-Studded Comics*, one of the major showcases of amateur comic strips of the 1960s, threw in the towel. Their premiere character, Dr. Weird, had been drawn mainly by Jim Starlin in 1970 and 1971, and Starlin had moved on. So many fans were getting pro assignments that the publishers of SSC were having trouble getting good quality strips. It was the end of an era.

By 1972, Overstreet's *Price Guide* made it possible for more and more investors to move into comic book collecting. A lot of the old-time fans had dropped out. That was the year I published my last issue of *Sense of Wonder*, while in my senior year at college. Fandom was changing. Comicons were getting more and more professional.

I wouldn't want anyone to think I'm putting down comic fandom after 1972. That would be like putting down all



comics after the Golden Age. I'm sure a lot of fans feel about the 1970s the same way I feel about the 1960s. But for the purposes of this book, I chose to concentrate on the earlier, formative years.

Roy: *What kind of interest do you think The Golden Age of Comic Fandom will generate?*

Bill: I really don't know. When I talk to some people, they're enthusiastic and think it has a lot of sales potential, and others just kind of get quiet ... and talk about what a small, specialized audience it will have.

I don't have any illusions about it having huge sales. But my gut feeling is that it's a subject, if presented properly, that would interest any serious comic fan. I wrote the book mainly as a labor of love. I did it because I wanted to read it. I didn't realize it would almost kill me in the process.  
[laughs]

Roy: *I can only imagine how hard it was to do all that research. Those old fanzines are hard to find, and then to bring it all together so that it makes sense. I think you did a wonderful job of blending all the facts and anecdotes together. It's an entertaining read.*

Bill: Thanks. I tried to make it as readable as possible. I didn't want it to get bogged down in long lists of obscure name and dates.

Roy: *Are you satisfied with the way it turned out?*

Bill: Overall, yes. I would have liked to have it published in a hardback edition, but that would have forced the price way up. The square-bound trade paperback with four-color covers is certainly sufficient.

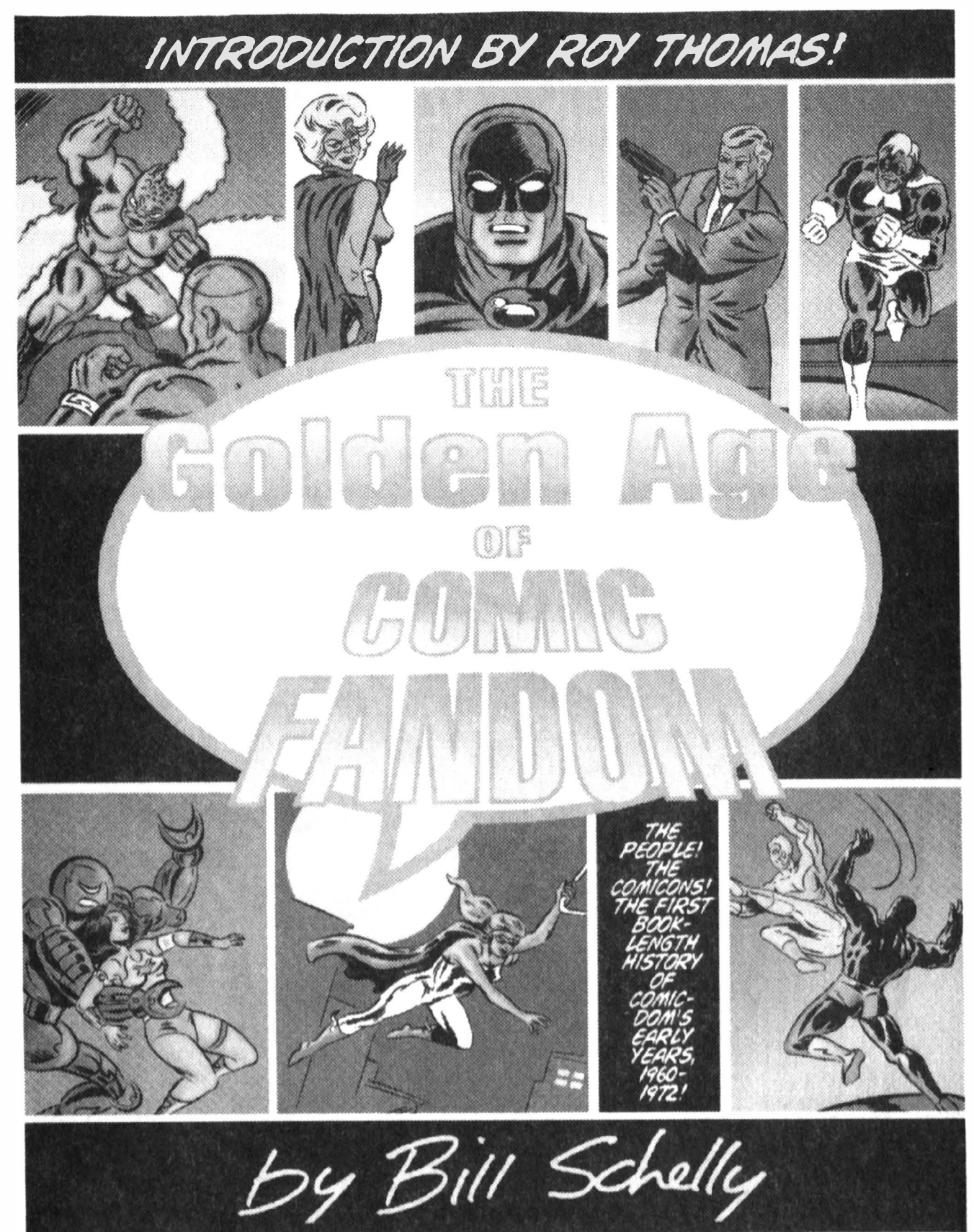
As far as the contents, I'm very pleased with it. Although with creative endeavors, as you well know, there's always compromise.

Roy: *You couldn't put everything in.*

Bill: Despite the fact that I mention a lot of fans, I imagine some are going to be disappointed when they look through the index. All I can say is, this is my version of the story. The text is about 65,000 words long, yet you could say it only scratches the surface. But that's the exciting part. It's a big story.

-end-

*Editor's Note: The Golden Age of Comic Fandom was revised and expanded in 1998, adding almost forty pages to its original length. Combined sales for both editions came to about 2,500 copies. About a year after this interview was published, Roy and I teamed up to produce Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine, and TwoMorrows Publishing brought back Alter Ego itself, in the form of a section in the back of Comic Book Artist magazine. Eventually Roy Thomas's revived Alter Ego came back as an independent magazine, with Yours Truly on board as Associate Editor.*

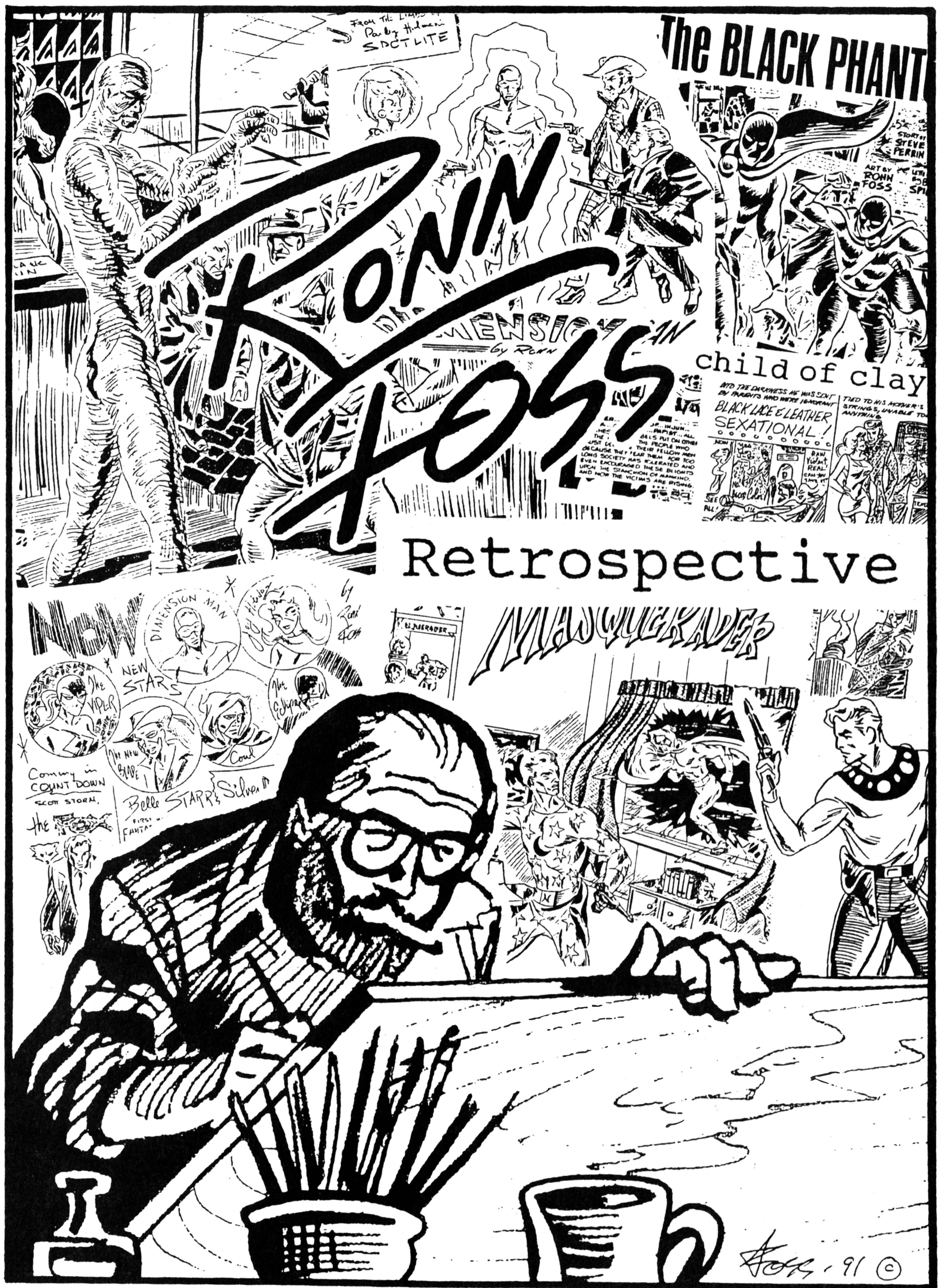


Above: Nils Osmar's cover to the first edition of The Golden Age of Comic Fandom. Below: Michael T. Gilbert's cover to the revised second edition.





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## 4 – Ronn Foss Retrospective

The first project—the one that began my research into the history of comic fandom—was a fanzine-format publication run through comics amateur press alliance *Capa-alpha* in January 1992 called *The Ronn Foss Retrospective* #1. Only about a hundred copies of that 64-page magazine were produced, although some of the material in it went into *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* and other Hamster Press books. Nevertheless, the lengthy interview with Foss himself—the only extensive one he gave—hasn't been widely available, until now.

Ronn Foss was, of course, an extraordinary first-hand source of information about the early stages of fandom. He was there, almost from the very beginning, picking up the reigns of *Alter Ego* and *The Comicollector* from Jerry Bails in late 1962, creating the first Alley Award statuettes, and drawing a series of dynamic, innovative comic strips that set the standard in the fanzines of the day. Ronn's work, aside from its intrinsic merits, reflected the social milieu of the 1960s, from the James Bond craze to the social protests that came during the Vietnam war and civil rights struggles.

In the course of interviewing Ronn, I had the opportunity to get to know him, and I discovered that he was a rare combination of introspection and generosity. I also learned how much fandom had meant to him, and how much he had given to it. This retrospective was intended to “give back” to him something for all the hours he spent at the drawing board and typewriter, out of love for the comics medium and its fans.

During comicdom's first decade, I was not only a fan of Ronn Foss' work, but a publisher as well. Out of his busy schedule, he took the time to draw the cover for *Sense of Wonder* #1 in May 1967, among other things. We had a history, and I felt strongly about documenting his multifaceted career.

The hardest part was deciding what to include, given the scope and sheer volume of the man's work. I decided to 1) try to include images and information about most of his best known costumed heroes and heroines, 2) feature a sampling of early or unfinished pieces that were not deemed suitable for publication, 3) showcase at least one complete strip full-sized, and 4) let readers know what Ronn had been up to in recent years.

I was also glad to be able to make room to reprint his “Trip Report” documenting his bus sojourn in 1963 that brought him into contact with Roy Thomas, Biljo White and others. Plus, it seemed essential to include a “stripography” of nearly all of his published comic strips.

The reason more of his comic strips (especially *The Eclipse*) aren't here—aside from space considerations—is that they have already been reprinted. “The Origin of *The Eclipse*” and his *Liberty Legion* chapter appeared in

*Fandom's Finest Comics* Vol. 1 (1967), “The Secret of Malimoor!” in *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine* (1998), and “Skyline Robbers” in *Fandom's Finest Comics* Vol. 1. Only the *Alter Ego* book is sold out as of this writing; the others are still available from Hamster Press.



*Jerry Bails playfully hoists Ronn Foss onto his back upon Ronn's arrival at Jerry's house for the Alley Tally Party in March 1964. Foss is holding a copy of *Alter Ego* #6 which had just rolled off the presses.*

Sadly, Ronn Foss passed away before this book could be completed. He died peacefully, probably in his sleep, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001...but not before he had enthusiastically approved the plan to reprint the retrospective for a wider audience.

In his later years, he was able to enjoy a resurgence of interest in his work. He had supported himself nearly all his adult life from his art-for-hire assignments, except for a couple of stints opaquing negatives for Russ Cochran's *E.C.* reprint books in the late 1980s.

He was most involved in the ongoing adventures of his co-creation with Dennis Druktenis, “Destiny, Vampire Mermaid,” which has been appearing from the last several years in *Druktenis' Scary Monsters* magazine. This brought Ronn's inimitable work to the attention of a whole new generation of admirers. I know he also greatly enjoyed the process of collaborating on *Destiny* with his best friend Grass Green, Mike Vosburg, J. E. Smith and others.





## Interview with

# Ronn Foss

By Bill Schelly

Ronn Foss was one of the most widely known and popular fan artists of the Golden Age of comic fandom. A man of many talents and wide-ranging interests, he had created his first costumed heroes while in high school, often in tandem with Richard “Grass” Green, another important artist in early fandom.

Unlike many artists who came later, Ronn had reached adulthood when he created his many highly visible strips, first on ditto masters and then with pen and ink. His mature sensibility lent a sheen of sophistication to his efforts.

While Foss is the first to acknowledge the influence of Joe Kubert’s excellent work on *Tor* and other features from the 1950s, his style is unique and unmistakable. The figures have a spontaneity and restless energy that makes them burst from the page. He was one of the first fan artists to experiment with the Craft-Tint shading process and wash work. He had few peers in the depiction of stalwart heroes, yet he was renown for his interpretation of the female form. *Good Girl Art* became a Foss trademark.

Ronn Foss, along with Biljo White, was the closest we had to an Artist Laureate in those days. In *Comicon*’s *Camelot*, Ronn may not have been King, but he was certainly Crown Prince. At one point, he edited both *The Comicollector* and *Alter Ego*, two of the most important and influential fanzines of their day.

For a while, it seemed like wherever a fan turned, he or she happily encountered a Foss illustration, cover or strip. *The Eclipse*, *The Cowl*, *Dimension Man*, *The Viper*, *Belle Starr*, *The Fox* and many others graced the pages of the top fanzines, generally meeting with approval. Just about every fan editor ended up knocking on Ronn’s door, or mailbox.

As his attention wandered from the super hero genre, he pushed the graphic story medium into new areas, with socially relevant strips like *Black*

*Phantom* (in collaboration with Steve Perrin), the first major black protagonist in the fanzines, and *Excel*, which delved into the turbulent political struggles of the Nixon era.

Yet, after an incredibly prolific decade, Ronn Foss seemed to disappear from our view. *Comicon* itself was changing, with the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* normalizing back issue prices, and amateur publications becoming increasingly dominated by popular professional artists. Where had Foss gone? What was he up to?

After finally tracking him down to a backwoods cabin in the Missouri Ozarks [in late 1991], I discovered that Ronn had not been idle.

Ronn’s rustic cabin is located on wooded land in the gorgeous Ozark country, bordering by the Mark Twain National Forest. From his windows, you can see a mile of woods in all directions. But on a cold November day, you’d probably find yourself huddling near the wood stove in his 12’ by 16’ work room.

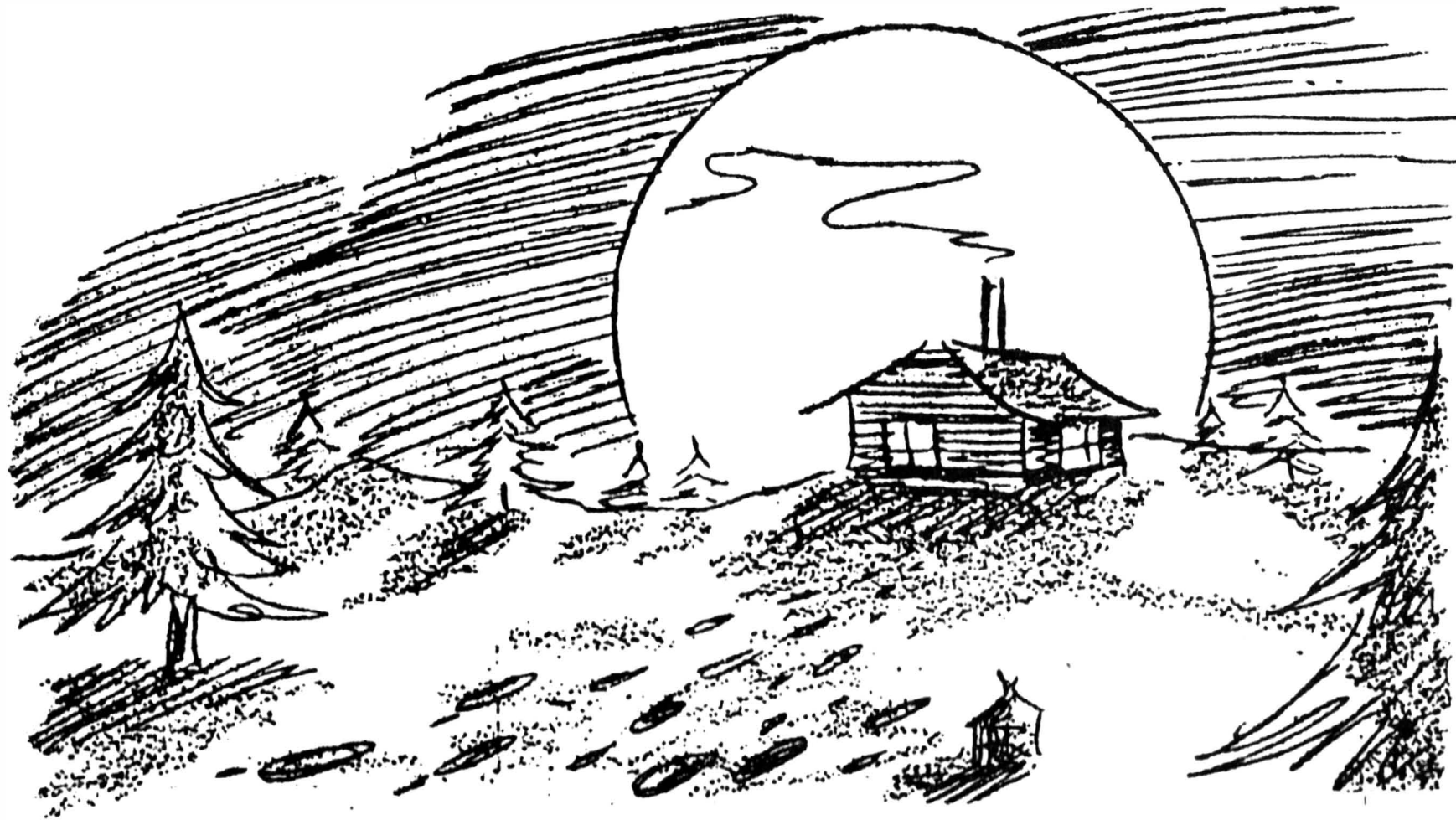
The room is lined with bookshelves and crowded from floor to ceiling with the memorabilia of a fannish life—“my major mess,” he calls it. Yet one feels that he likes it that way.

With the lights low, the pine and oak fire sending golden speckles across the ceiling like sun dancing on water. Ronn hunches near the stove, and you notice his hair has thinned from those 1960s photos, and his beard is gray now. But as he fiddles with the fire with one hand and puffs on a hand-rolled cigarette in the other, his eyes glitter with the enthusiasm of someone half his age.

Perhaps as a result of going days without speaking very much to anyone, his voice at first is measured, as if he’s choosing his words carefully. Yet before long, the contents of his ever-present coffee mug works its magic, and it’s clear that Ronn relishes the chance to gab.



All artwork  
accompanying  
interview is by  
Ronn Foss  
unless  
otherwise  
noted.



Bill: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

Ronn: I was born Ronald Eugene Foss on Bastille Day in the year of *Gone With The Wind* and *Ninotchka*, in Defiance, Ohio ... and like to think the old fort gave me my sense of rebellion.

Bill: 1939 was also the year of *The Wizard of Oz* and many other great movies. It's interesting that you mention your rebellious side right away.

Ronn: I've always been a rebel of sorts. Isn't that what this country was founded upon? Rejection of control by others?

Bill: Were you a teenage rebel like James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause*?

Ronn: I was never the obvious trouble-making rebel. I simply questioned everything, and I do to this day. Far too much is touted, publicized and perpetuated as being unquestionable fact. My experience has proven to me that a great deal of what is espoused as fact is hogwash. Anyway, that's my rebelliousness, only from a mainstream point of view.

In high school there was a quote teenage gang unquote who called themselves the Sons of Satan, wore leather jackets and so on. Rumor was that the girls who hung out with them were called the Daughters of Desire. But so much of that was innuendo and rumor, and I was never a part of it.

I related, as most teenagers did, to Dean in *Rebel* and Brando... but not in the challenge society, throw-it-in-their-face type of attitude. More in the sense of questioning and doubting. I think it was Thomas Jefferson who said there



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“I’ve always been a rebel ....”

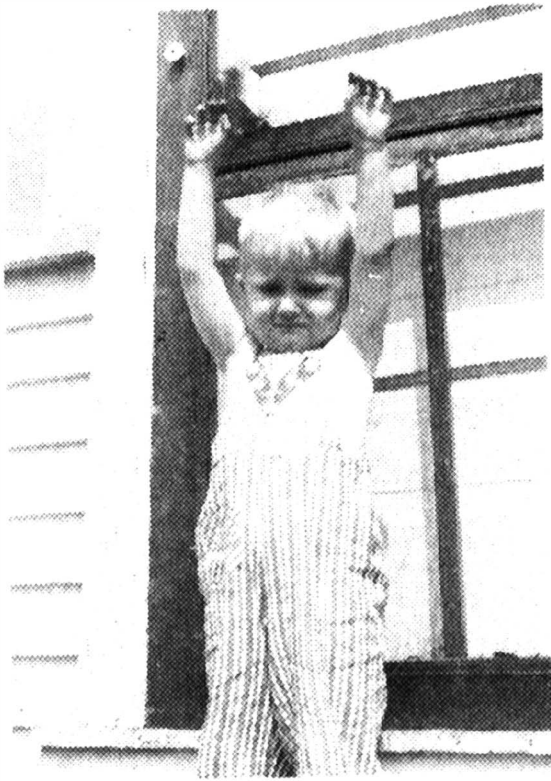
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should be some sort of rebellion every few years, just to keep everything honest.

*Bill: You grew up on small farms. What are your primary memories of our early childhood?*

Ronn: To me, growing up on a farm was probably the ultimate freedom. You'd look out your window and there were no other buildings in sight, no



Ronald E. Foss, ca. 1942  
"Aiming Skyward"

traffic, none of the neon and noise of the cities. Just woods, trees, wildlife ... the sound of a distant freight train. We heated with coal, and many's the time I went with my father walking along the railroad tracks with a burlap flour sack picking up coal that would fall off the trains.

It was playing among the tall corn, which to me was like a jungle. It was sling shots, using stones against tin cans. It was climbing up the ladder in a big, big barn, playing in the hay, and diving into bins of grain. It was gathering around the radio in the evenings to listen to all the old favorites of the 1940s, like The Shadow, Green Hornet, Fibber McGee and Molly, Fred Allen. "Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear...."

It was a relatively carefree life back then. I suppose in a way what I'm doing in a similar situation today. Trying to get back home again.

*Bill: How would you describe your family life?*

Ronn: My father was pretty much a jack of all trades. At times a truck driver, at times a machinist. I had two sisters, both younger than I. I was the first born. The house was always wood

frame, usually big. We each had our own bedroom, either raw board floors or linoleum, sparsely furnished. I recall moving every year or two in my first ten years. Different houses, different locations, all in Ohio and Indiana. My biggest hate was the school bus trip in the middle of winter, standing out there half-frozen waiting for it.

*Bill: What kind of schools did you attend?*

Ronn: It was a little red brick schoolhouse with eight grades in one room, each row a different grade. So we never got very much attention from the teacher, maybe an hour a day, if that. Thus it was fairly free.

*Bill: How did you get interested in comics?*

Ronn: In 1946, at the age of seven, I was given lots of *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Marvel Family*, *Whiz Comics* and *Master Comics* by an uncle who strongly resembled the Big Red Cheese. [The original Captain Marvel of the 1940s.—Ed.] Slightly overweight, wavy hair, arched eyebrows and that perpetual smiling squint. I saved those for almost ten years until I traded them all for a like amount of EC comics. Although I liked the relatively simplistic cartoony Captain by Beck and others, I preferred Mac Raboy's more realistic work on Marvel Jr. By the time I was a teenager, I was ready to appreciate the science fiction and fantasy stuff by Williamson, Frazetta, Wood, Crandall and the others.

By this time, I'd already collected most of *Batman*, *Detective* and *World's Finest*, since I liked the believability of a man in a mask and cape driving a car, as opposed to the alien Superman and family. Although I'd enjoyed the Kirk Alyn serials, my choice was Rocketman, for the same reasons. My favorite serial is *King of the Rocketmen*, also *Spy Smasher* for the action and *The Phantom Empire* with Gene Autry.

*Bill: When did you start creating your own comic strips?*

Ronn: In 1949. That's when I did digest-sized comics of my own character, the Black Widow, unaware of the heroine of the same name from

the 1940s. Mine was alternately male, female or western, as the mood struck.

*Bill: Did the anti-comics hysteria being whipped up by Dr. Fredric Wertham affect you?*

Ronn: Some time in the early 50s, I guess '51 to '53, just before going to high school, I know I took a lot of flak from my parents—that is, my father, not my mother, she was rather sympathetic—but my dad, and my relatives, who knew that I liked to draw and saw I wanted to be a comics professional. They gave me a great deal of static, because at that time there was a lot of publicity about the alleged bad influence of comics on young minds. It was especially hard to be a comics fan and collector at that time.

*Bill: When did you meet Richard "Grass" Green?*

Ronn: I met Grass in 1953 or 1954 in high school in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He'd also been doing his own home made comics, so we spent lots of weekends together drawing and creating new heroes. We also spent a lot of time on the phone together, an hour or two every other night,

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*Captain*  
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discussing comics and our creations. We were best buddies ... haunting local second-hand stores for old comics, just a nickel each. Neither of us ever had more than a half dollar to spend. We acquired such treasures as *Whiz* #2, *Batman* #6 and early *Boy Commandos*.

*Bill: What were the current comics that you collected?*

Ronn: The EC's, of course, especially their science fiction titles. Also *Young Men's Adventures* from Atlas with new stories of Captain America, The Human Torch and Submariner. I distinctly recall the sudden disappearance of EC horror. By the mid-fifties, comics had been reduced from their former profusion to just Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman from DC, Ghost Rider from Magazine Enterprises, Dell's Tarzan, and Joe Maneely's exceptional Black Knight, Ringo Kid and Yellow Claw.

I also distinctly recall picking up the first issue of *Mad*, because it looked so totally different from any other magazine on the stand, and being absolutely blown away by its zaniness. I really loved *Mad*.

I remember when Prize brought out Simon and Kirby's *Fighting American* and St. John published *Tor* by Joe Kubert. Grass liked Simon and Kirby, while I was a fan of Kubert's *Tor*, and Hawkman in *Flash* issues.

*Bill: That's not too surprising, since Grass's and your work showed the influence of those particular favorites. Do you still have any of the art or strips you created during this period?*

Ronn: My oldest surviving drawings are from 1956. Captain TV, inspired by Simon and Kirby's Captain 3-D, and Steelman, inspired by H. G. Peters' Man o' Metal in *Reg'lar Fellers Heroic* comics. Other characters were the Brothers of Adventure, the Ghost and Captain Fortune. Since these were hand-colored, they won't photocopy well. Some of my early drawings are signed Gene Foss, which is what I went by for a while. I had the foresight to date much of my work, as well as copyright it.

In addition to the early comic strip-type art, I also drew posters, comic strips, and cartoons for the weekly school paper and year book, as well as



constructing advertising for the Quimby Theaters in Fort Wayne for showings of *The Mummy*, *Man With the Atom Brain*, *House of Bamboo* and so on. I also did TV artwork for two different Junior Achievement shows and was interviewed on a third.

*Bill: Did you have any formal art training?*

Ronn: In probably the second year of high school, when I was getting a few acknowledgments on my artwork, my father looked into correspondence art schools such as Famous Artists. It cost something like \$200 to \$300, which he found far too much. So instead he got me the \$20 to \$30 course from

Pleasant Hill, Ohio, that you see in a lot of magazine ads, "Learn to Draw Cartoons." This course was so pathetically dated, it was something out of the 1930s that had never been up-dated. It was next to useless. I did however go on to win a scholarship to weekend art classes where I began doing figure art in my senior year.

I did my first oil paintings outside of high school. A placid boat dock with a mid-eastern sailing ship ... a breakers on a beach at sunset ... a black cat looking at the viewer. One of a wino with his head in his hands. There was also one of the head of my dad with a skull showing through the blue-black flesh, eyes in shadow and lips in a permanent grimace.



*Bill: Looking at your resumé, I see you left high school in March of 1957, getting your G. E. D. rather than graduating.*

Ronn: Yes, I joined the Air Force, or Air Farce as I like to call it, in 1957 and was sent to Saudi Arabia. Since one is likely to be there only once, most guys took up 35mm photography, which I also did, learning dark room processing as well. This was when I began filming 8mm movies. My first one I called *Assignment: Arabia*.

*Bill: Did you create any strips when you were overseas?*

Ronn: I didn't get much drawing done that year. There was too much to see and do, like water-skiing. Grass and I maintained an ongoing lengthy correspondence, though ... some of our letters reaching a hundred-and-twenty-five pages with lots of drawing included! We called 'em booters, short for book-letters.

*Bill: There are a few things, like the pencils for an incomplete strip called "The Rocket Incident." What was that about?*

Ronn: That was to be the true story of how I built a six inch balsa wood rocket, and improvised an engine wrapping a lot of layers of aluminum foil around firecracker powder. One night we stepped out on to the back porch. I held it in my hands, and my buddy lit a match to it. I felt a thrust of energy, and held on a moment too long ... because the thing exploded in my hand. We were standing there for a microsecond in a ball of fire. There was a tremendous boom! The foil just ripped to shreds, and mildly cut our faces. We were a pretty bloody couple of guys when the Air Police came to investigate.

*Bill: Sounds like you were lucky it didn't end your drawing career right then and there. Were you able to take all or part of your comic collection overseas with you?*

Ronn: No, I left my entire collection safe at home, housed in a huge foot locker. When I came back a year later, my parents told me that it had been stored in the basement, which had flooded. So all my comics were soaked!

Rather than risk drying them outside in the sun and air, I had them scattered all about the floor of my room. I mean, you could hardly tip toe through them. And one day my dad ambled in, asked me to letter the mailbox with his name, and callously just stomped right across them... squish squish! That was the first time in my life at age eighteen that I ever hit the ceiling and had it out with him. I'm basically a quiet, reserved fella but we went toe-to-toe that day.

*Bill: After your year in the Middle East, where were you stationed?*

Ronn: In 1958 through 1960, I was stationed at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California, which is forty-five miles from San Francisco. I spent lots of my free time in the North Beach area [of San Francisco], digging jazz and poetry and more expressive arts than cartooning.

*Bill: Your description of the North Beach area conjures up images of coffee houses, bongos and Jack Kerouac. Were you involved in the beatnik scene?*

Ronn: Yes, I was really caught up in that scene in 1958 and 1959. It strongly appealed to me. I felt simpatico with beat poetry and music. I loved jazz, good solid 1950s experimental jazz. I was first turned on to black blues by a black roommate in the Air Force and being that we were but an hour from San Francisco, we'd go there just about every weekend. I've always loved San Francisco. It's a beautiful city with a distinctly international flavor. First we'd hit Chinatown, going through it just soaking up all the exotic smells and sights, and then continue past the Tenderloin to the North Beach section where jazz was streaming out the doors.

You'd look in the windows and see sunglasses ... turtle neck sweaters ... a lot of black clothes ... artists painting ... girls actually swinging on swings indoors, what they called the 'swinging scene.' The espresso ... the posters on the walls. I once caught a glimpse, in fact, of Kerouac, wailing on skins. And about a block away was City Lights book shop run by Lawrence Ferlingetti. It had lots of beat poetry, hand-made publications. I read a lot of Allen Ginsberg, and felt

a tremendous affinity with their counter, or at least alternative culture.

*Bill: What type of art were you doing then?*

Ronn: I continued to work on various projects, and did my first double-sized inked work then, a UFO strip called "They're Here," which I sent to Atlas in 1959 when they were still doing science fiction titles. I never received a response or my artwork back. The only remnant is an unfinished page, my first attempt at double-size.

*Bill: Didn't your first marriage take place around this time?*

Ronn: Yes, shortly after I got back from Arabia. My first wife was a high school sweetheart. Her name was Myra. We simply married too young. I was nineteen. She was only seventeen. We were married in 1958 and it lasted less than two years. We parted amicably. No children. She did not share my idea of a rustic lifestyle.

*Bill: When were you discharged from the military?*

Ronn: March of 1961.

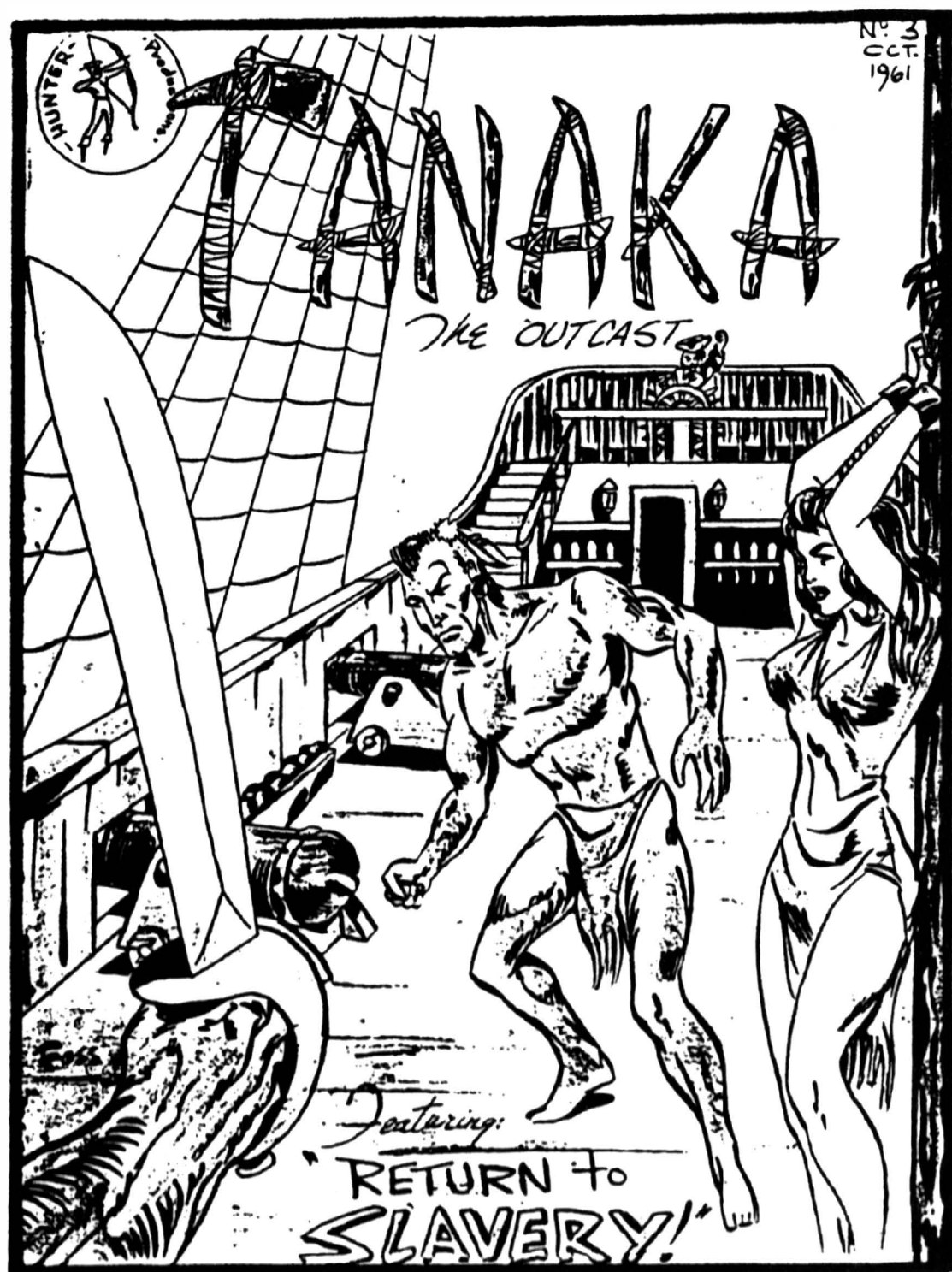
*Bill: There's an interesting coincidence. Alter-Ego #1 was published in late March of 1961. Was this how you heard about comic fandom?*

Ronn: No, I answered Ed Lahmann's letter in a *Brave and Bold* letter column. We traded a few comics and exchanged letters for about a year. Ed eventually sent me *Alter Ego* #2, which began my correspondence with Jerry Bails. I had also done a few illos, covers and a strip for EC and *Mad* fandoms by this time.

*Bill: Your earliest published strips were done in ditto. What was the first one?*

Ronn: The first complete super hero strip was the Dimension Man origin in Parley Holman's *Spotlite* #1. Then there was the Little Giant story, "The Wheel that Menaced Washington!" which was written by Steve Gerber under the pen name S. G. Ross. That saw print in the first issue of Steve's fanzine *Headline*. These appeared in 1961.





*Tanaka the Outcast* was one of the last strips Foss did before entering fandom. *Silver Dallas*, an unpublished strip from 1961, reflected Ronn's interest in the western genre.

**Bill:** Can you trace the history of your Native American character *Tanaka the Outcast*, also known as *Strong Bow*? Why didn't this strip ever see print?

**Ronn:** *Tanaka* was the last character that I did before fandom. I did about nine or ten stories, hand-colored. He's one of the characters I did the very most of. I liked the outdoors; I liked the Indian designs, everything about them except the test for manhood. I've always felt a kinship with Native Americans. I would've made a good Indian. My kids and I once built a ten to twelve foot tall teepee, eight feet in diameter. Amazing how fast it can go up, just a couple of hours, from scratch. We slept in it that same night.

**Bill:** How was it that you ended up becoming editor of *Alter Ego* with the fifth issue?

**Ronn:** Grass and I did the cover for *Alter Ego* #4. And, as Grass can verify, I've always been a craftsy type, working with metal, wood, leather, clay, plaster and paint. I carved the seven-inch redwood Alley Award trophy figure and made plaster castings from it. I painted six each silver and gold—silver for the amateurs and gold for the pros—and

sent them to Jerry. Packed them very carefully, I thought, in toilet paper and egg cartons. Somehow, Gardner Fox's arrived broken in pieces, and he had to glue it together with epoxy.

Being the hyper-enthusiastic type I am, writing very long hand-written letters profusely illustrated, Jerry was frankly impressed with my enthusiasm, interest and energy. Somewhere he said something to the effect that it almost takes an artist to be an editor, to know how to make the most out of the overall appearance of a fanzine. Jerry asked me to continue publishing *The Comicollector* and *Alter Ego* when he wanted to concentrate on *The Comic Reader*. By the way, I still have the original redwood carving I made the Alley Award castings from.

**Bill:** Had you met Jerry yet?

**Ronn:** No, this was all done through the mails. Jerry had originated *The Comicollector* because the ads were beginning to crowd the articles out of *Alter Ego*. [Referring to a stack of fanzines.] Let's see... CC #1 was dated September 1961. I took it over a year later, publishing #7 through #12, which was the September 1963 issue.

**Bill:** *Alter Ego* #5 saw the publication of the origin of *The Eclipse*, which

really put you on the map as one of the premiere fan artists. The art was very tight and expressive, excellent in every way.

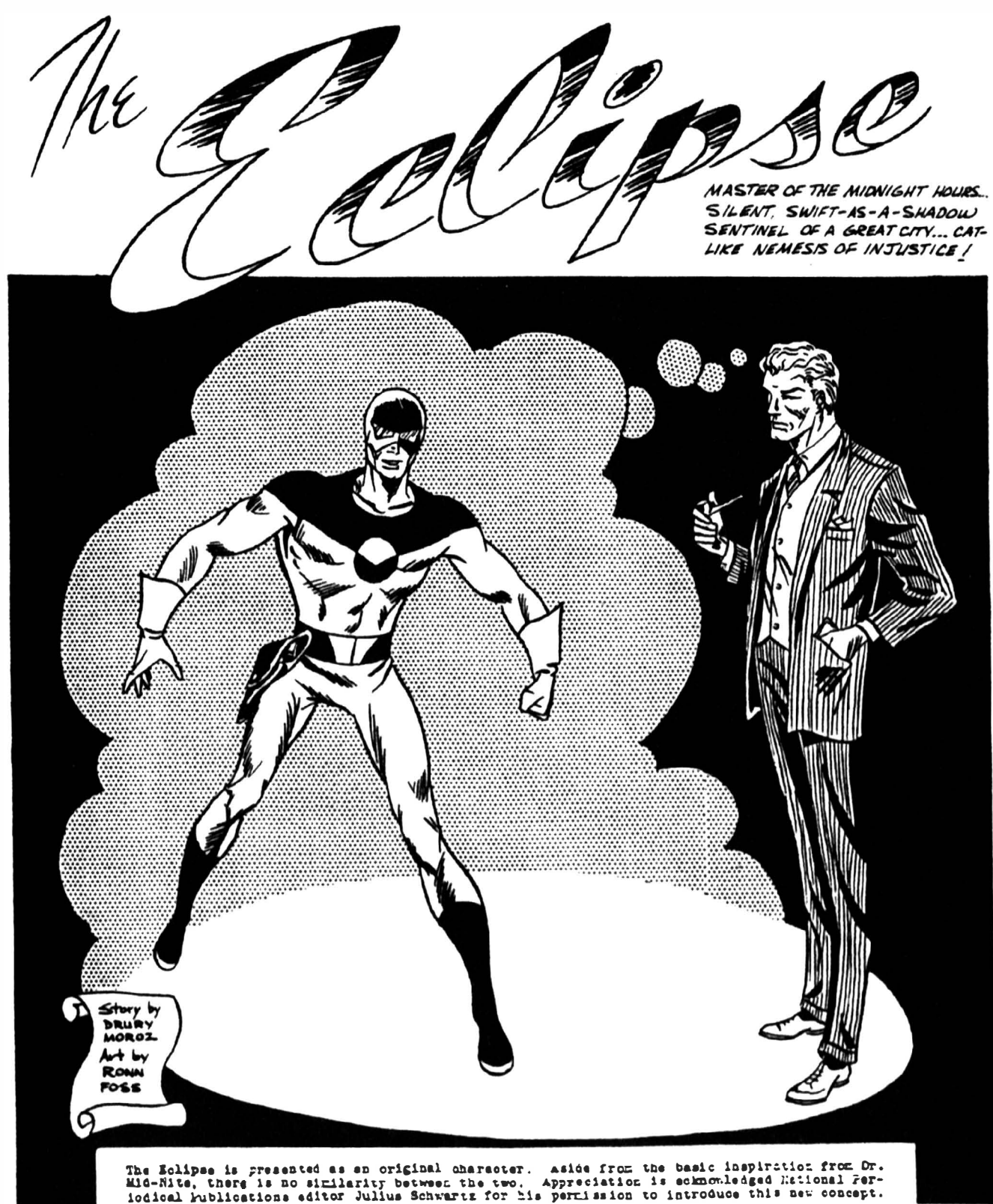
**Ronn:** *The Eclipse* was one of my favorites, too. It was my first inked strip published in photo offset, known as litho then. Of course, it was an updating of *Dr. Mid-Nite*. The writer, Drury Moroz, was a prison guard, believe it or not.

**Bill:** How did *The Eclipse* come about?

**Ronn:** Dru Moroz and I had met through the mails, like most comic fans did at that time. Like myself, he had ambitions of breaking into the pro ranks, as a writer. We decided to collaborate on a hero with the intention of submitting him to one of the New York publishers.

About six months before I assumed editorship of *AE*, we had settled on a hero who was a mentalist—normal except for his hyper-sensitive mind, whose powers were limited only by his ability to apply concentration. Then Dell comics beat us to the punch with *Brain Boy*. Our hero was to have been called *DynaMan*, and I still feel he would have offered better sales potential.





Above: Splash panel to the origin of *The Eclipse* from *Alter Ego* #5 (1963).

Below: First page of the second *Eclipse* strip, from *Alter Ego* #8 (1965).



In late 1962, adventure heroes were just getting re-established, so we decided on a revival attempt and settled on Dr. Mid-Nite. But [DC editor] Julie Schwartz told us that we could use neither the name nor the crescent moon, which had been his symbol. This suited me fine, since I preferred modernizing the character anyway. Eventually we came up with the name *The Eclipse*, which suggests victory over lawlessness. I redesigned the costume in all manner of variations, adding appropriate symbolisms as he began to take on depth and significance. The strip was completed while I was living in California.

*Bill: Both the origin and the follow-up in AE #8, "The Mystery of Malimoor," were extremely well received.*

*Ronn: The origin won an Alley Award. It was very gratifying.*

*Bill: I also vividly remember how impressed I was with your introductory four-page chapter to the Liberty Legion strip in Star-Studded Comics #4, which was another early offset strip—even though pages two and three were reversed due to a printer's error.*

*Ronn: That was the second inked effort, though it may've been preceded in print by "Return of the Nebula" with The Cowl in Masquerader #6, which was from this same period. That one was written by Mike Vosburg.*

*Bill: Why did you give up the editing and publishing of Alter Ego and The Comicollector?*

*Ronn: The circulation of The Comicollector got to be over six hundred, which was a lot of 1963. There had been plugs in Fantastic Four, Mystery in Space and Fantastic Monsters, and it just took off. Though I'd had publishing in my veins since writing a 'Neighborhood News' sheet in 1951, I found the demands of bi-monthly publication of twenty-four to sixty pages, and the ever-increasing work on Alter Ego taking too much time and energy from drawing. I remember one day my mailbox was stuffed with fifty-three items! So I turned the zines over to Roy Thomas and Biljo White, both then located in Missouri. As you know, before long G. B. Love took over publishing CC as Rocket's Blast-Comicollector, and it lasted into the 1980s.*

*Bill: Who were the first fans you met in person?*

*Ronn: My earliest fan encounter was with Steve Perrin. I was a mail carrier wearing sunglasses against the California heat, and he drove up asking "Are you Ronn Foss?" I said, "No, I'm Doctor Solar," which began a long friendship and a couple of collaborations, as well as mutual involvement with the Society for Creative Anachronism later on.*

*My next contacts were visitors in 1962 while working on The Comicollector, members of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. Bruce Pelz, Dian Girard, Ted Johnstone and Fred Patten, who supplied photos of themselves in costume for a masquerade at a previous WorldCon as Dr. Fate, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and The Flash, as they appeared in the Justice Society of America comics of the 1940s. Shortly thereafter came Bill DuBay, Rudi Franke, Barry Bauman and Marty Arbunich.*



**JIM BEAM**

From the film 'UNDER COVER' © 1965 by RONN FOSS

I'D JUST FILED MY REPORT WITH DIVISION COMMAND AND WAS ABOUT TO ENJOY THE FRUIT OF MY LABORS—

AS WE EMBRACED I NOTICED A REFLECTION THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN THE MIRROR—

PULLING ELAINE DOWN, I POINTED MY EXPERIMENTAL WEAPON, ALLOWING FOR THE DEADLY SWEEP OF IT'S BEAM—

... AND SHE SCREAMED—

THE ELECTRONIC RAY SLICED THROUGH THE DARKENED ROOM, BURNING A PIN-HOLE IN THE FRENCH WINDOW, THEN VAPORIZED THE VITAL ORGANS IN HIS THORACIC CAVITY—

...AND SHE FAINTED—

I HADN'T YET BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE INCONCEIVABLE POWER OF THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND WEAPON. I COULDN'T FAINT, SO I SETTLED FOR THE IMPORTED BRANDY...

AND POURED THE CHASER OVER ELAINE

AS SHE STIRRED INTO CONSCIOUSNESS, I-UH...

BUT I RECONSIDERED—

From the pages of California History—  
**SOLANO the BRAVE** by Ronn Foss

THE BRANCH HOUSES AFLAME, FIRST TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF IS CHIEF MALICA! BLINDLY, THE TRIBE FOLLOWS—

STOP! DON'T DO AWAY WITH YOURSELVES!!

YOU NOBLE PEOPLE DESERVE TO LIVE IN PEACE! WE WILL GO AND LEAVE YOU ALONE!!

THOUGH NOT UNDERSTANDING SANCHEZ' WORDS, THE INDIANS REALIZE THEY ARE STILL FREE! BUT—MANY OF OUR BROTHERS DIED—WE WILL HAVE REVENGE!!

MEANWHILE, MILES AWAY— Sem Yeto\*, A TOWERING 6'7", LEADS A HUNTING PARTY...

\* BRAVE ONE

ALMOST SILENTLY, THE ARROW FLIES TRUE, AND A GREAT STAG BUCKLES— THE TRIBE WILL FEAST WELL THIS NIGHT!

SHORTLY— LOOK! A BIG FIRE AT Yul-Yul\*!! I WILL GO ON AHEAD AND SEE!

\* VILLAGE

SEM-YETO, YU-KE KLIK-ah\*! WE WANT MIN-ne-les\*!!

NO, BROTHERS— NO MORE BLOOD-SHED! MAKE PEACE!

YES, PEACE... YES, SEM-YETO! CHIEF SEM-YETO, CHIEF!!

I WILL PICK A WIFE, AFTER WI-pah nik-ah\*!

\* ENEMY BATTLE; WAR

NEXT PAGE: THE END OF THE WORLD



Bill: So that's how you happened to do so much work for Voice of Comictim and their other zines. They later published some of your offbeat things like Jim 'Laser' Beam and Solano the Brave. Was Solano an offshoot of your original Indian character, Tanaka?

Ronn: Yes, I was doing the last Tanaka comic strip when the newspaper that I worked for in California switched from weekly to daily, and needed a lot of material to fill up all those pages. And they were having a bi-centennial celebration of the founding of Fairfield in Suisun County. So I researched the Suisun tribe that had originally lived there and did some artwork for a newspaper page. That led to Solano the Brave being submitted to Bill DuBay.

Bill: You wrote a trip report [in The Comictim] which recounted your bus trip, when you moved back to Ohio from Suisun, California in 1963, meeting Biljo White and Roy Thomas. It's a very interesting bit of fandom history. Those early fan gatherings must have been a lot of fun.

Ronn: There was a time before the first comic conventions got organized when a handful of us traversed interstates just to get together and share the camaraderie of other fans. Just a dozen or even half that reveling

in being with others of like mind, knowing in our heart of hearts that comic books were indeed an art form, something the Europeans knew long before us. We called these gatherings conclaves—overnight meets of only five or six fans to swap titles and tales about the genre.

One of the really active fans then was Alex Almaraz of Chicago, who gathered small groups together in the tri-state area, people like Ross Kight, Chuck Moss, Don Glut, Keith Greene, Mike Vosburg, Don and Maggie Thompson, Bill Thailing, Jim Rossow, Bob Butts, Larry Raybourne, Mike Tuohey, Billy Placzek, Grass Green and I, culminating in a jaunt to Jerry Bails' near Detroit in 1964. Who'd have guessed that comictim would become as huge as it is today?

Bill: I take it you are referring to the Alley tally party held at Jerry's house in March of 1964, chronicled in Mike Vosburg's article in Masquerader #6?

Ronn: Yes. I'd never been to a science fiction con, but having talked to Fred Patten and the others who had created such great costumes, I constructed a Rocketman outfit and appeared as such.

Bill: Who was Joy Holiday?

Ronn: Joy was the mascot I created for The Comictim to provide a female counterbalance to my own male presence, as editor. A costume was made and three or four different women wore it, one of them being my sister Beverly, as in the photograph with my Batmobile.

There's a cute story involving Joy. While visiting Cleveland, Alex suggested Joy talk to Sherman and Wayne Howard, who published a fanzine called Action Hero. They had phoned to speak with me. The young guys, in their early teens at the time, were honestly flabbergasted to actually hear her speak with them! She of course put on her sweetest, most fannish attitude and encouraged them to draw.

Bill: You published Alter Ego #6, your last issue, from Van Wert, Ohio...

Ronn: ...and Dateline: Comictim #1 through #12 on a monthly basis, in 1963 and 1964. That's where I



introduced Scott Storm, The Fox, as a serialized ditto strip.

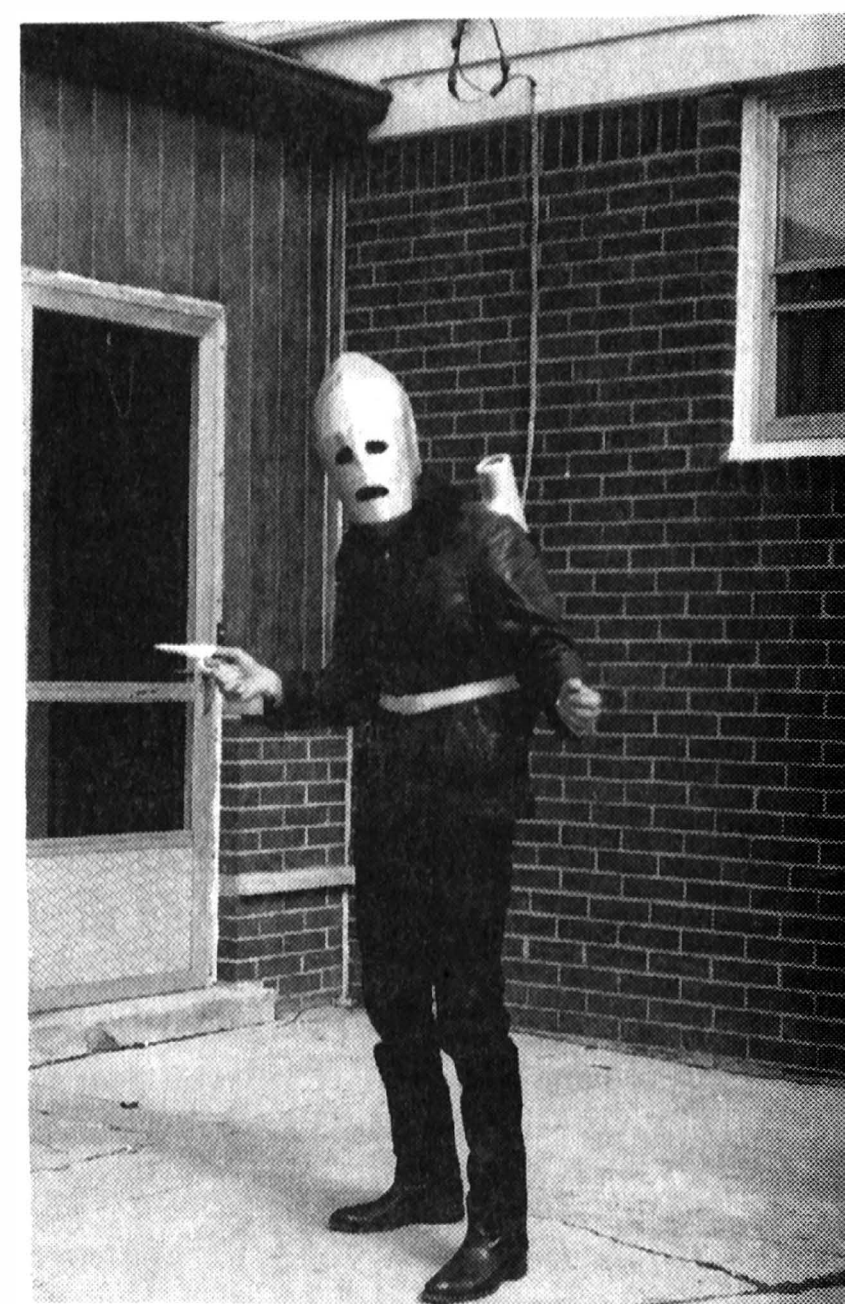
Bill: Didn't you quickly move back to California?

Ronn: In 1964, I headed back to the west coast, settling in Santa Ana not far from John and Tom McGeehan, who I met a few times. On the way I visited the Texas Trio and filmed Larry Herndon, Buddy Saunders, Howard Keltner, L. L. Simpson and others, as well as Alex Almaraz and



Joy Holiday

From Alter Ego #7 (1964)



Foss as Rocketman  
Alley Tally Party, March 1964

Continued on Page 166



# "Trip Report"

by  
Ronn Foss

from *The Comicollector* (1963)

I took a long, last look at Suisun, California as the Grey Dog pulled out. I'd lived in this area for nearly six years, and though I'd come to appreciate the west coast weather, I felt little remorse in heading back east. I say "back" because I was born and raised in Ohio, spending my first seventeen years there. My thoughts flew ahead of me as the bus rumbled into the night. I was anxiously looking forward to meeting some of the top names in comic fandom, which had been pre-arranged by mail.

Just a few days prior to leaving, I'd welcomed the visit of collectors Mickey Martin and Bill Birtcil from Sacramento, and Rudi Franke and Barry Bauman of Oakland. The five of us spent an enjoyable six to eight hours comparing preferences in collecting, the pro comics, and assorted relative interests. We made a few trades before parting company, and in general were all re-enthused about continued correspondence.

I feel that these informal get-togethers strengthen relations and re-awaken the spirit of fan activity, therefore heartily recommend it to all whenever possible.

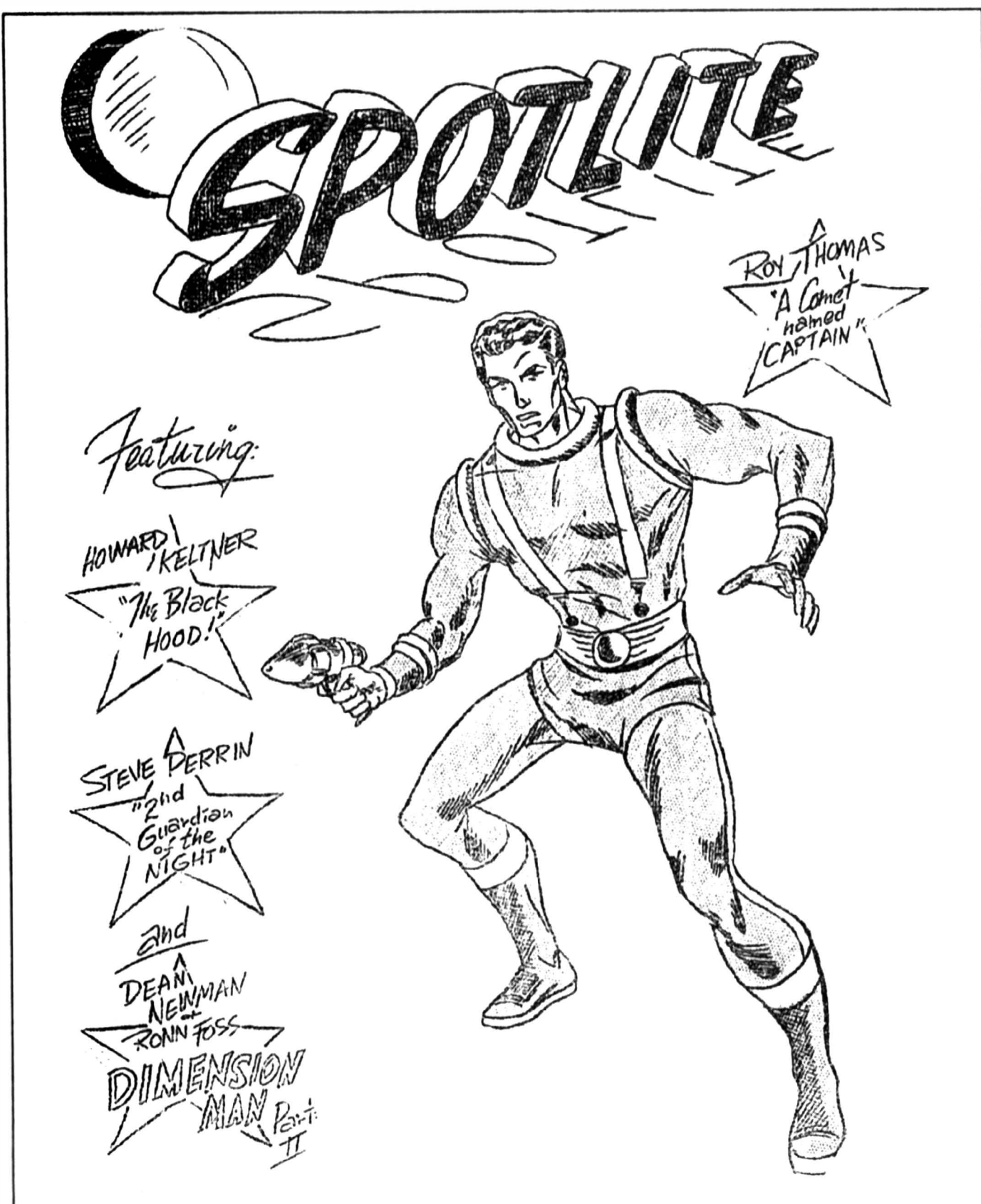
The Rocky Mountains hadn't even been crossed when Bus #1163 plunged into a snowstorm. I personally reveled in it since it'd been years since I'd even seen the white stuff.

However, I forgot all about it by the time Salt Lake City was reached, for it was here that I hoped to meet Par Holman, editor of the fanzine *Spotlite*. As it turned out, we were behind schedule and could only spend a half hour here, whereas the usual stop is one to one and a half hours. Bless you, Alexander Graham Bell... at least Par and I were able to talk to each other for the thirty minutes, and at that, I had to interrupt our excited conversation when the departure announcement was made. (I still wonder what SLC coffee tastes like.)

Anticipation mounted as Missouri was reached. I'd been especially anxious to meet Biljo White, editor of the fabulous *Komix Illustrated*, ever since we began corresponding about Kirby and Wood's "Sky Masters" newspaper strip, and learned that each other was interested in becoming pro comic artists. I always held high regard for Bill's work, but never fully appreciated his capabilities until I'd actually seen much of his pro-intended art, gracing the walls of his White House of Comics.

Not only is Bill a fine comic artist, as evidenced by the popularity of his *Komix Illustrated* and other work in various zines, but he's an adept oil, watercolor, and pastel artist as well. I was fascinated by a particular portrait he'd done of his beautiful wife Ruthie. (For more info, see her write-up in *Alter Ego* #5.) I was disappointed that Roy Thomas hadn't been able to get there at the same time I was as we'd planned, but we solved this later. As it was, I've never enjoyed myself so much as I did those two days spent with the Whites in Columbia, Missouri. Bill and his wife are about the finest, most gracious people I've ever met, and though he may send me a bomb for this, I advise anyone in their area to meet them. I had to fight the strongest urge to accept their proposal to stay with them a week until Jerry Bails and Roy would be there, but I knew there'd be another time, and felt I had to get on to Indianapolis to meet Ed Lahmann, who tallied the 1962 Alley Award poll votes, and Jerry, who was stopping there on his way to Biljo's.

A phone call from Columbia to Arnold produced Roy's word to meet me in St. Louis, where he had planned on dating Joy Holiday. I reluctantly left the Whites, yet we were already planning the next get-together, possibly at some form of comicon in the immediate area.



Cover to *Spotlite* #2 (1962)





PHOTO: RUTHIE WHITE

Biljo White and Ronn Foss pose for Ruthie White with one of the silver Alley Award statuettes crafted by Foss.

In St. Louis, over pizzas, Roy, Joy and I got to know each other, albeit fen who've corresponded and worked together via the mails are hardly strangers. Although I'd passed through St. Louis many times on cross-country trips (courtesy of Uncle Sam), I'd never really seen the city, so I was escorted around a bit. Most interesting to me was the "nightclub quarter," all with an out-of-place-anywhere-else atmosphere, which reminded me of the Italian, Spanish, and French night spots in San Francisco's North Beach area (the equivalent of New York's Greenwich Village). The pleasant evening was capped off by a visit to Roy's apartment (after leaving Joy to other things), where he showed me his full run of *All-Star Comics*, the only thing lacking in Biljo's collection (though with all he has, he can do without it). I spent the night at Roy's, reading. Next morning, I was headed for Indianapolis.

I arrived at Ed Lahmann's just an hour or so ahead of Jerry. Ed possessed the same indefinable magnetism I'd found in Biljo and Roy: some wondrous aura of sincere exuberant personality; pure pleasure to meet and talk to. I recall that a possible "colony" of comic fen/collectors entered the discussion, not unlike conventionally accepted artists colonies. At any rate, I'm quite sure a comicon is inevitable, and bound to be an occurrence to remember.

Ed's collection consisted of just around two or three hundred comics, yet all are choice items. He explained that

he'd traded "long" (many for just one) to get his wants, and naturally had gotten what he sought. I wasn't surprised to find that Ed too was quite an artist in his own right, since he'd sent many worthy articles accompanied by especially good art. In his home were several colored-pencil portraits, and a couple interesting figure studies done from classical themes.

Jerry showed us his nearing-completion DC Index, which will be an immeasurable aid to collecting, and is to sport surprise covers. He also had with him the first color run-offs of the Flash/JSA/Vandal Savage issue, and Atom/Hawkman. Ed and I expressed regret that the Hawk was still getting the run-around, though we all agreed that at last *some* exposure of Hawkman is better than none at all.

The second day at Ed's, we got down to business: that of going over the tally of the 1962 Alley Awards. There were very close tabulations, minute percentages to crosscheck, and final decisions as to when the results could be made public. All the while, we analyzed basic comic history, current trends, and speculated on forthcoming possibilities. Much of our conversation was taped by Jerry, which was played back when he visited Biljo.

-end-



# INTRODUCING — The LIBERTY LEGION



FROM THE BYPATHS OF THE NATION THEY COME, UNITED FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH A COMMON AIM — THE DEFENSE OF THEIR COUNTRY FROM A DIRE THREAT! COME WITH US ON THIS, THE INITIAL CASE OF THE SOON-TO-BE LEGENDARY LIBERTY LEGION!

~ Roll Call ~

THE DEFENDER · DR. WEIRD  
ASTRAL MAN · MERCURY  
THE CHANGING · POWERMAN

## CHAPTER 1

art by  
Roll Foss

## "A GATHERING OF HEROES!"

story by  
LARRY HERNDON  
& BUDDY SAUNDERS

FROM THE EMPTINESS OF THE SKY A BOOMING VOICE POURS FORTH A GRIM THREAT... HEAR MY VOICE, PEOPLE OF AMERICA, FOR YOUR LIVES REST IN MY HANDS—



ACROSS THE COUNTRY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TURN FROM THEIR DAILY TASKS TO LISTEN... I HAVE THE MEANS TO DESTROY YOU ALL, BUT I WILL SPARE YOU THAT YOU MAY SERVE ME—



THE DISEMBODED VOICE DICTATES MONSTEROUS TERMS OF TOTAL SURRENDER OR COMPLETE ANNIHILATION...

YOU HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO BROADCAST A SURRENDER! SHOULD YOU FAIL TO DO SO I WILL LEVEL THREE OF YOUR GREATEST CITIES IN A MERE TEN SECONDS!!



Star-Studded Comics #4 (1964), and a subsequent page with innovative Foss panel arrangement.

INTRODUCING:

The

# HIGHWAYMAN



The Cartoonist #1 (1966)

# The COWL



Masquerader #6 (1964)



Continued from Page 162



Above: Foss visits the Texas Trio in 1964. That's Gary Acord and Howard Keltner flanking Ronn.

Below: The side panel of Ronn's Batmobile.



Joy Holiday. I drove my Batmobile, a '56 Olds Super 88 with a bat head on the grill. Visited Glen Johnson on an Indian reservation in New Mexico where he taught. Out in southern California again, I met with Bill Spicer of *Fantasy Illustrated*. Soon afterward, I drew the Black Phantom strip for him, scripted by my friend Steve Perrin.

*Bill: Your movie a la James Bond called Undercover, starring Jim 'Laser' Beam, was the subject of much fan curiosity. The strip version was very sexy stuff for the time. How did this come about?*

Ronn: I was working as an ambulance attendant, and the driver brought a different girl in with him every other night

for weeks. We were twenty-four hours on, twenty-four off, so we had our own bedrooms. I proposed to make a film of it. I figured, nobody would believe this, even after seeing it! Since the girls wouldn't accept filming of themselves as-is, I wrote a scenario and did storyboards for an 007-type movie. Goldfinger was then showing, so I gave the heavy a steel hand painted silver. Everyone liked the idea, so over the span of about three months, I shot a dozen girls and some heroic action, even going up in a helicopter for one scene. My gimmick was a laser pistol, thus called him Jim 'Laser' Beam. The film was titled *Undercover, or, Sex and the Secret Agent*. Our heavy was three hundred pounds, though a real teddy bear of a friend who did a very convincing job. After completing the 8mm silent film, with a tape-recorded soundtrack from Stan Kenton's "City of Glass" album, I began a comic strip based on the movie, which was published in *Voice of Comictim*.

Years later, in 1972, I got a request to show Laser at a Texas comicon, and though I couldn't attend, I was later told that several adults took their kids out when the opening bedroom scene came on the screen.

*Bill: DuBay and Arbunich also published one of your strips in All Stars #1, Belle Starr, First Woman in Space. She was one of the first memorable heroines created for fandom, doubtless appreciated by the few women in comictim back then.*

Ronn: I'd never heard of a feminist movement nor any such thing at the time, of course. This was 1965, when I was doing Jim 'Laser' Beam, after all. But there's an even stronger case for women in "Velvet of Venus," the fourth and last Dimension Man strip done in ditto for *Fighting Hero Comics* #12 a year earlier. When D-Man asked Velvet, "Why a woman in space rather than a man?" she answers to the effect that her people believed that women were *superior* to men in most ways. It was just that I empathize strongly with females.

*Bill: Following things chronologically, you didn't stay in California that long as this juncture, did you?*

Ronn: In 1965, lots of loving letters from Coreen Casey took me back to my birthplace, Defiance, Ohio and my second marriage. Coreen was an Illinois college girl who I had met through fandom. We moved to Florida to paint signs with a brother-in-law after marrying. There I also did some snake hunting, catching them alive for their venom to make into anti-venom, heart and cancer treatments and so on. While I was in Florida, I met Margaret Gemignani, who co-edited *Mask and Cape* with Steve Perrin.

Coreen is a writer. She assisted me on a lot of comics beginning with *The Fox* in 1965, and *The Eclipse*. She wrote a sequel to *Belle Starr*, and a number of other things.

*Bill: There were a few vocal detractors of your 1960s work, saying it looked rushed or too loose. How would you respond to this?*

Ronn: My techniques are a result of my own experimentation with the medium, as well as love for certain artists' work before me. One was Everett Raymond Kinstler, whose fluid, sketchy style of science fiction and westerns of the 1940s and 1950s was derived from people like Charles Dana





Ronn and Coreen, 1965

Gibson, as in *The Gibson Girl*, around the turn of the century ... as well as James Montgomery Flagg and J. Allen St. John of the Tarzan books.

Grass Green and I were also fans of Carmine Infantino's inking of his own work on Pow Wow Smith and Detective Chimp, which was much freer and more dramatic than those strips he penciled but were inked by others. Of course, Al Williamson's E.C. art had this same sketchiness that gave it an impact and tension others didn't have. And later there were guys like Mike Kaluta and Jeff Jones. To me, such raw lines give the art a refreshing aliveness, compared to most other ultra-clean and polished—and dead—comics.

*Bill: I always felt that one could see what you were striving for, the essential image, even when you didn't spend a lot of time on details.*

Ronn: As I said, I've always tried to explore various techniques to give my work a difference, which is not to say better ... but at least not the same as everyone else. Like anyone, I have my ups and downs, so there are naturally inconsistencies. I'm not a machine, functioning the same, day after week after month after year. If that's what some want, wait until computers take over comics. I'm afraid that day may come sooner than later.

Chris Rock wrote that consistency is a hobgoblin [paraphrasing Ralph Waldo Emerson], which I feel is true when it comes to art. It's desirable to maintain some degree of identifiable sameness. Still, I believe boundaries should be constantly pushed beyond former limits. Otherwise, we'd still

be rubbing mineral colors on cave walls like our Stone Age forefathers!

Looking back, it's apparent how my style evolved. Some tight ... some loose ... some a combination of both. Ever-changing, as nature is. To me, it's either a growth process or stagnation.

*Bill: What happened to the much-ballyhooed "Warrior of Llarn" strip that was to be adapted from the Gardner Fox book by Roy Thomas and drawn by you?*

Ronn: I did a few drawings. Then I discovered that Roy was to get paid forty percent of the total for the so-called impetus, and doing the breakdown of the book. And Fox and I were each to get about thirty percent. And we went around and around about this. Because a comic strip is a considerable labor, drawing after drawing, page after page. In my view, comic books are primarily an illustrative art form. They can be sold, can be enjoyed, without any dialogue whatsoever, just pictures like a silent movie. So I think writers, however good they may be, do not deserve anywhere near half of the grand total. So that's what stopped me on "Warrior." Roy wanted forty percent and I was only to get thirty percent. No way, José! Roy got Sam Grainger to follow up and the first part was published in *Star-Studded Comics*.

*Bill: While you were in Florida, you drew the cover for the first issue my own fanzine Sense of Wonder #1, featuring the Immortal Corpse.*

Ronn: I liked that character, and was pleased with my interpretation on the cover, except the windows in the background look more like filing cabinets.

Belle STARR 



Belle Starr, *First Woman in Space* – All-Stars! #1 (1965)



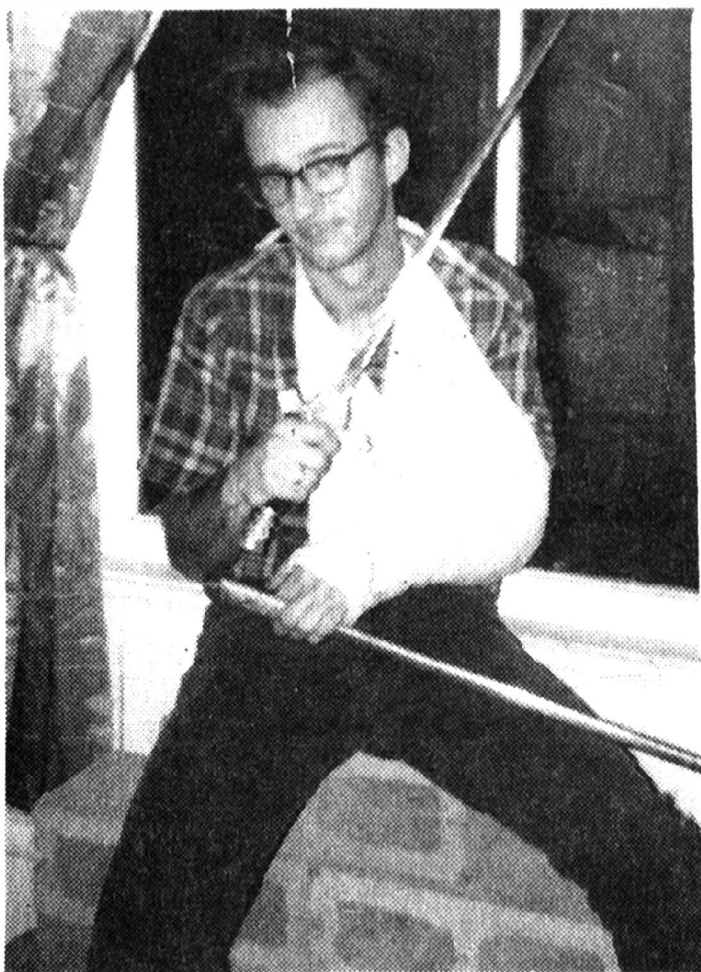
*Bill: As usual, you didn't stay put very long.*

Ronn: There was a song around this time, "San Francisco" by Scott MacKenzie, which you probably remember. Well, we rapidly became turned on to alternate lifestyles, and so returned again to San Francisco. We moved there just in time to catch the end of the Summer of Love [in 1967], a very interesting scene in many ways.

I got a day job working for the U.S. Post Office as a training instructor and carrier. We linked up with the Society For Creative Anachronism through Steve Perrin, and I was able to explore my interest in that whole area, especially including archery.

*Bill: What were some of the fannish projects you were involved in at this time?*

Ronn: We wrote "The Sorceress and The Satyr," a thirteen-chapter serial, though only got to shoot one. We were also fans of Edgar Rice Burroughs, notably science fiction, and sword and



*Foss with broken wrist  
San Francisco, 1967*

sorcery, so I did numerous drawings in those genres. Several were published in *Amra* around 1969, appearing with another idol of mine, Roy G. Krenkel, who I've always felt never got the attention he deserved.

I remember getting the first issue of *witzend* at a poster shop in Haight-Ashbury, as well as *Zap* #1, and sent my initial underground strip "Like It Is" to Bill Pearson in New York when he took over *witzend*. He expressed interest, but it was never published.

We attended the 1968 BayCon, the science fiction WorldCon, and out of an awareness of ecological concerns, ended up publishing two issues of *Pandora*, and then a newsletter called *Issues*.

*Bill: How long were you a member of comics apa Capa-alpha?*

Ronn: I had been a member back near the beginning, with #2 at the end of 1964, and only stayed through #11 in the summer of '65. I joined again with #43 and stayed for another ten issues, through February 1969.

*Bill: Didn't you do some work for Marvel Comics?*

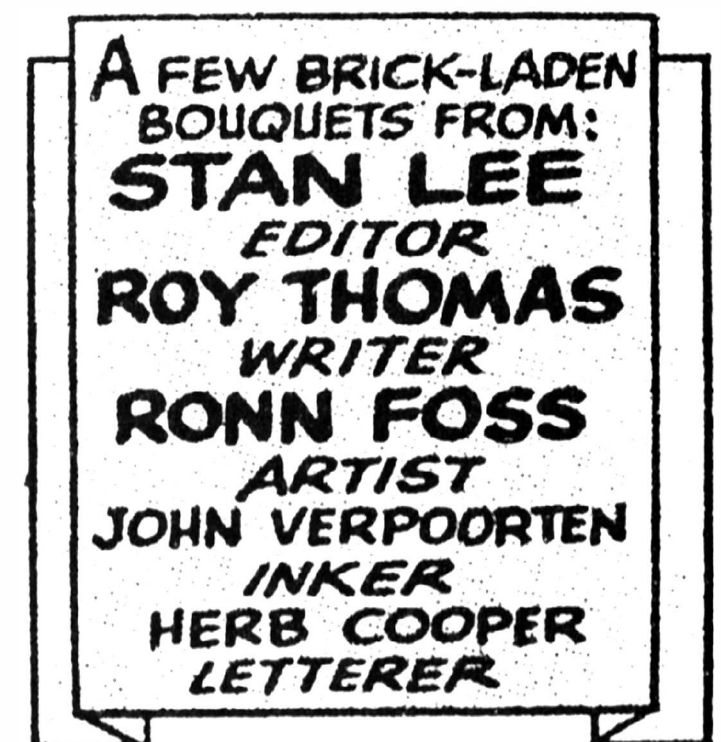
Ronn: In 1968, Roy Thomas, who was then a Marvel editor, phoned to ask for some penciled Valentine parodies for *Not Brand Ecch* #13. When I'd finished those, he suggested I try the upcoming Conan strip, which I began. I was in the process of developing some preliminary drawings, and a first page, of my version of Conan, trying to stay away from the Frazetta image. While I was working on it, Roy called back to say they'd hired an English kid named Barry Smith who would work for half the rate, which I wouldn't. At the time, creators had very little control over their own works, which could be all but ruined by uninspired inkers or cut by non-artist editors or otherwise diluted in the process of mass publishing. I'd always been a rebel to status-quo systems, so I felt I had to go my own way, whatever that amounted to. What little I had developed of Conan was inked by Sam de la Rosa, I think, and published later in *Fantasy Crossroads*.

*Bill: What was it like trying to break into the pros at this point in time?*

Ronn: DC and Marvel were, by turns, distant, condescending and non-responsive to fan artists in the '60s and '70s, with the exception of Roy, who blew hot and cold. Joe Orlando wrote me saying "Relevancy [in comics] is dead!" That's what tore it, for me. In 1971, wanting to get out of the city, Coreen and I moved back to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. I got a job working for National Mill Supply in shipping and receiving. We re-linked up with Grass, who I urged to try the underground market. He did, and sold.

I didn't, until much later ... though I scripted one of his strips in *Good Jive* #1.

It was during this time that Alex Almaraz from Chicago made a lot of trips to visit, bringing along his Flash Gordon 16mm sound movies. And since my children Dawn and Scott, at that time ages four and three, loved movies just like I do, they really got into the early Flash Gordon serials.



*Credit box from  
Not Brand Ecch #13*

*Bill: We seem to have come to the end of your first decade in fandom, when you had done most of your costumed hero work: Eclipse, Black Phantom, Dimension Man, Highwayman, TheViper, The Fox and so on. Did you have one particular favorite?*

Ronn: Excel was my personal favorite character, despite the lack of fan acceptance, which I attribute to the fact that he was an anti-hero. In the third ten-page story, he never even appears in costume, though he uses a laser zap to barbecue two FBI agents who kill the girl who turned him on to nature. I scripted a fourth ten pager called "On Trial." The splash was him facing the judge, and most of the story was a debate about crime and punishment. Remember, these were the Nixon years. I've always wondered if Ditko's Mr. A was a polarized reply to Excel, being of the extreme right on the political spectrum while I was on the left.

*Bill: It seems that Excel was a precursor to Robocop, the Terminator and Deathlok. Also, those TV-screen panels of news reports that you*

*Continued on Page 173*





CAPTAIN— THAT IS, **MR. TEMPO**, WE ALL KNOW YOU PROBABLY FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN A GOLDFISH BOWL, BUT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MAYOR'S OFFICE, I MUST ADD CONGRATULATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, AND PRESENT YOU WITH THIS TELEGRAM FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES!



From Star-Studded Comics #14 (1968)





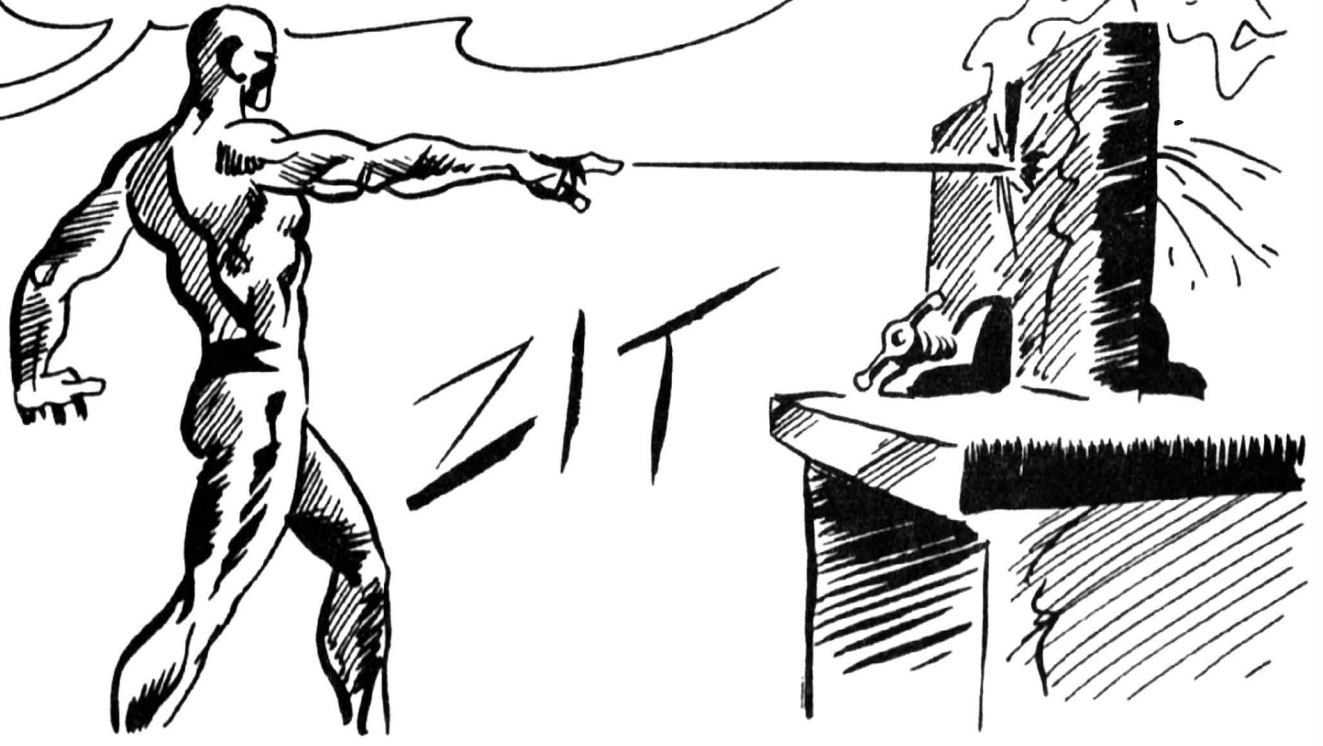


THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!  
HIS MANNERISMS,  
THE WAY HE MOVES,  
ACTS - HE... HE  
CAN'T BE A ROBOT!

GENERAL, I'VE DEVOTED MY ENTIRE  
LIFE TO THIS PROJECT - AS  
HAVE MANY OTHERS! XL HERE  
IS THE CULMINATION OF SEVERAL  
GENERATIONS OF EXPERTS IN  
THE FIELD!!

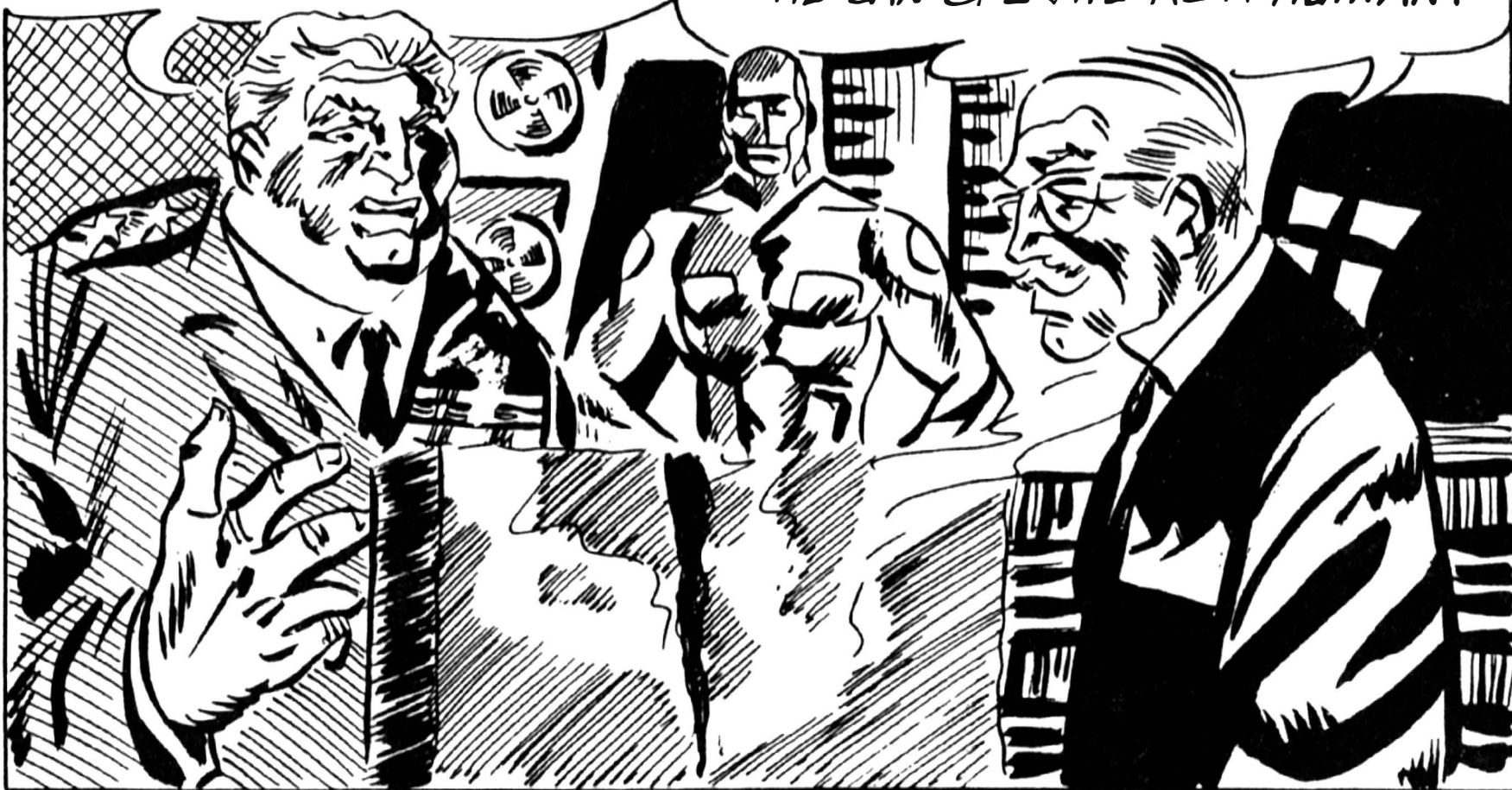


XL MEANS EXPERIMENTAL LASER, FOR HE'S BEEN  
ENDOWED WITH TOTAL LIGHT AMPLIFIED SIMULATED  
EMISSION OF RADIATION! THE FULL RANGE OF THIS  
NEWLY DISCOVERED POWER ISN'T COMPLETELY UNDER-  
STOOD YET, BUT IT APPEARS TO BE ALMOST LIMIT-  
LESS! AND YET, SIMPLE SOLAR TRANSISTOR  
BATTERIES EXPOSED TO SUNLIGHT OR INFRARED  
AND ULTRA-VIOLET RAYS RECHARGE HIM TO FULL  
CAPACITY WITHIN MINUTES!



IF ALL YOU SAY IS TRUE, AND I MUST  
ACCEPT YOUR WORD, THEN LANK-  
XL ... IS TRULY THE SUPER-  
AGENT WE'VE LONG NEEDED!

SINCE NO ONE BUT YOU AND THE  
WHITE HOUSE AND I KNOW THAT MY  
TRUE SON DIED IN VIET-NAM, XL  
HAS A READY-MADE ROLE WHEREBY  
HE CAN OPERATE AS A HUMAN!

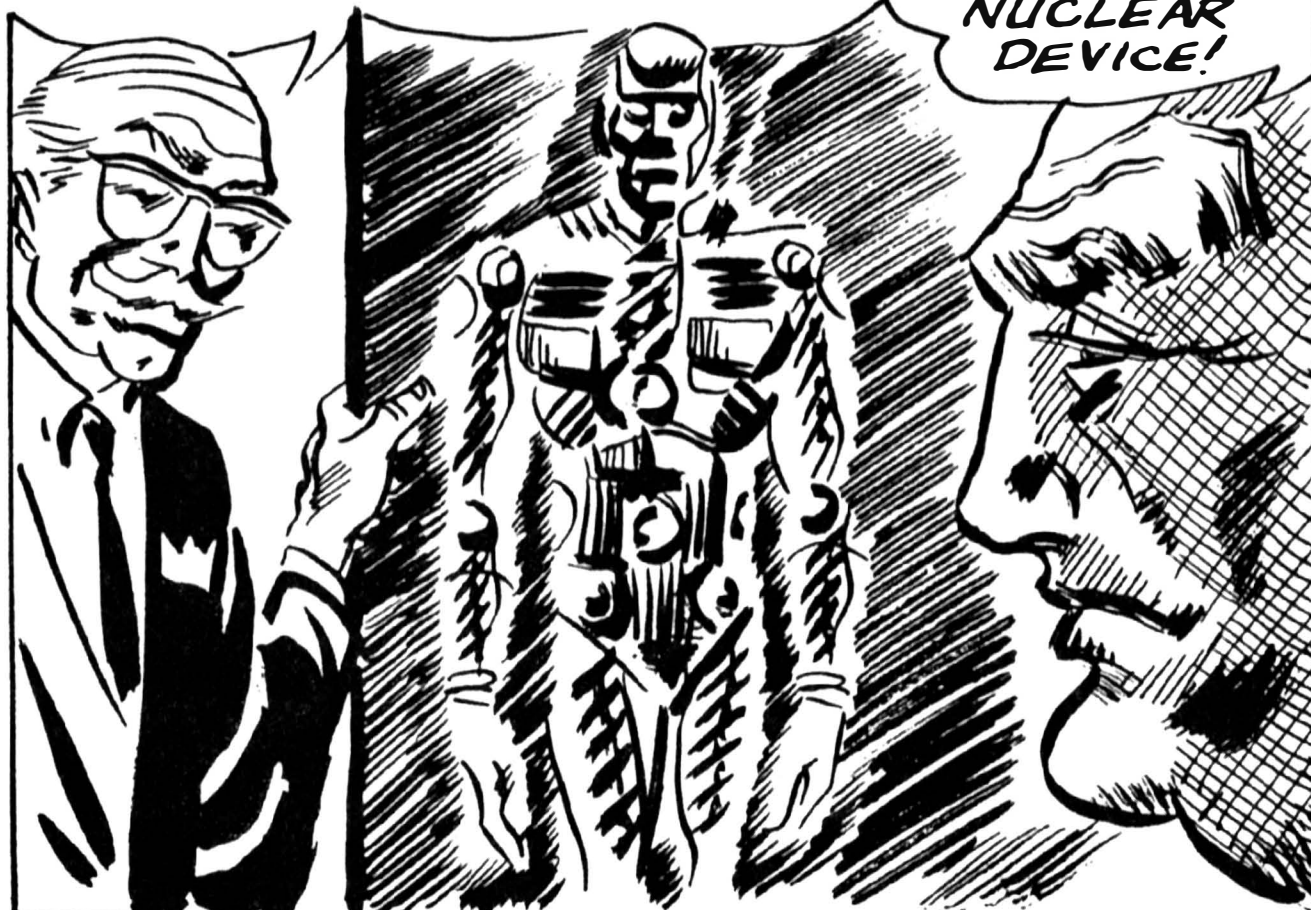


TO CONFUSE THE ENEMY, OVER HIS  
HUMANOID SKIN I'VE GIVEN HIM  
A METALIC UNIFORM, IMPERVIOUS  
TO ANYTHING BUT HEAVY ARTILLERY!  
OF COURSE, HIS ULTRA-PRECISION  
FUNCTIONING COMPONENTS MIGHT  
BECOME DAMAGED BY WELL-  
PLACED SHOTS!



THIS FLUOROSCOPE SHOWS HIS VERY  
INTRICATE INTERNAL COMPLEXES,  
INCLUDING TELEVIEWER AND RADAR,  
YET ALL METALS ARE TITANIUM ALLOYS  
COMBINED WITH FUSIONABLE PLUTONIUM!

I'M NO METAL-  
URGIST, BUT IT  
SOUNDS TO ME  
LIKE HE'S A  
WALKING  
NUCLEAR  
DEVICE!



HE COULD DETONATE HIMSELF,  
FROM A MINOR DEGREE TO  
TOTAL DESTRUCT, WITH VIRTUALLY  
NO YIELD - ONLY WHERE DIRECTED  
WOULD THE BLAST OBLITERATE!

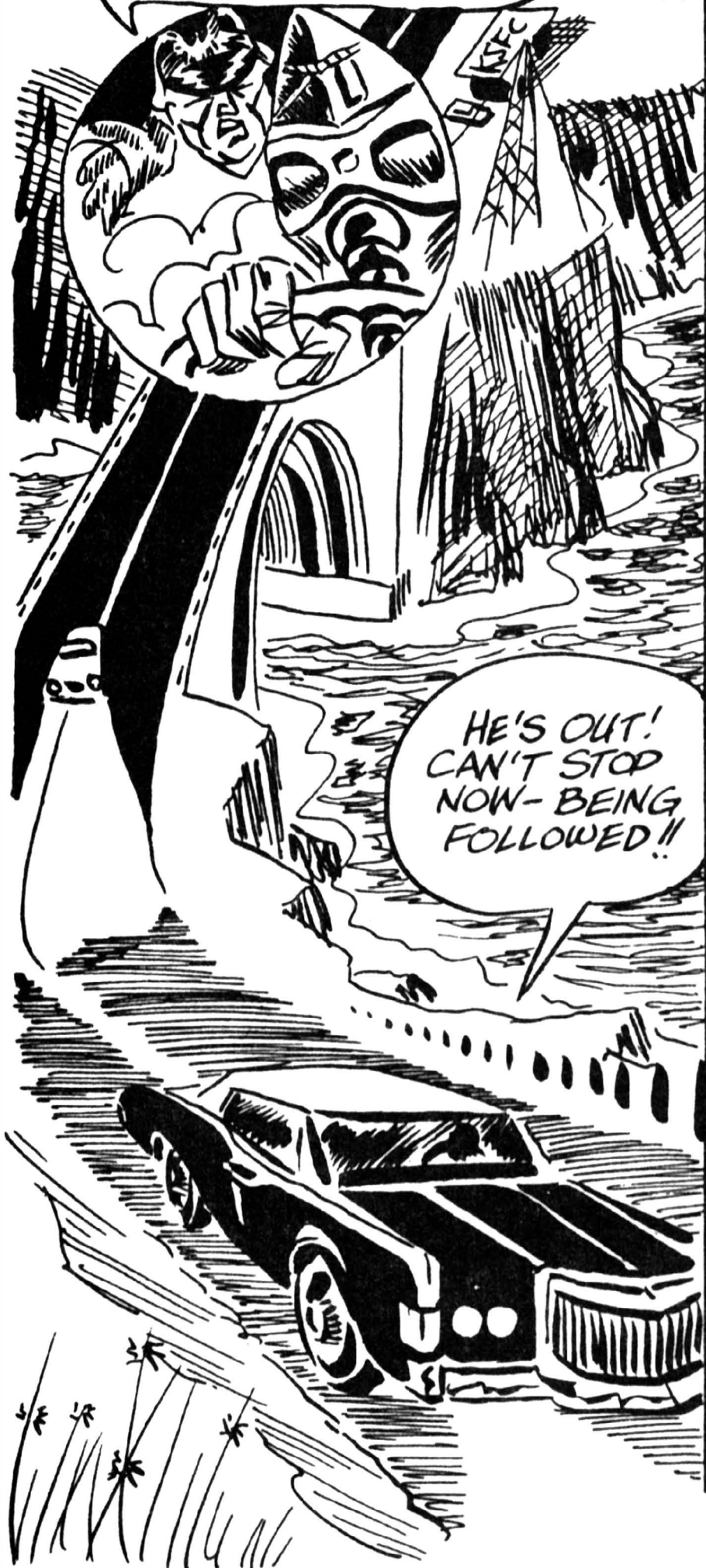
I'VE SEEN ALL I  
NEED TO! I'LL  
MAKE MY  
REPORT TO  
WASHINGTON  
IMMEDIATELY!!





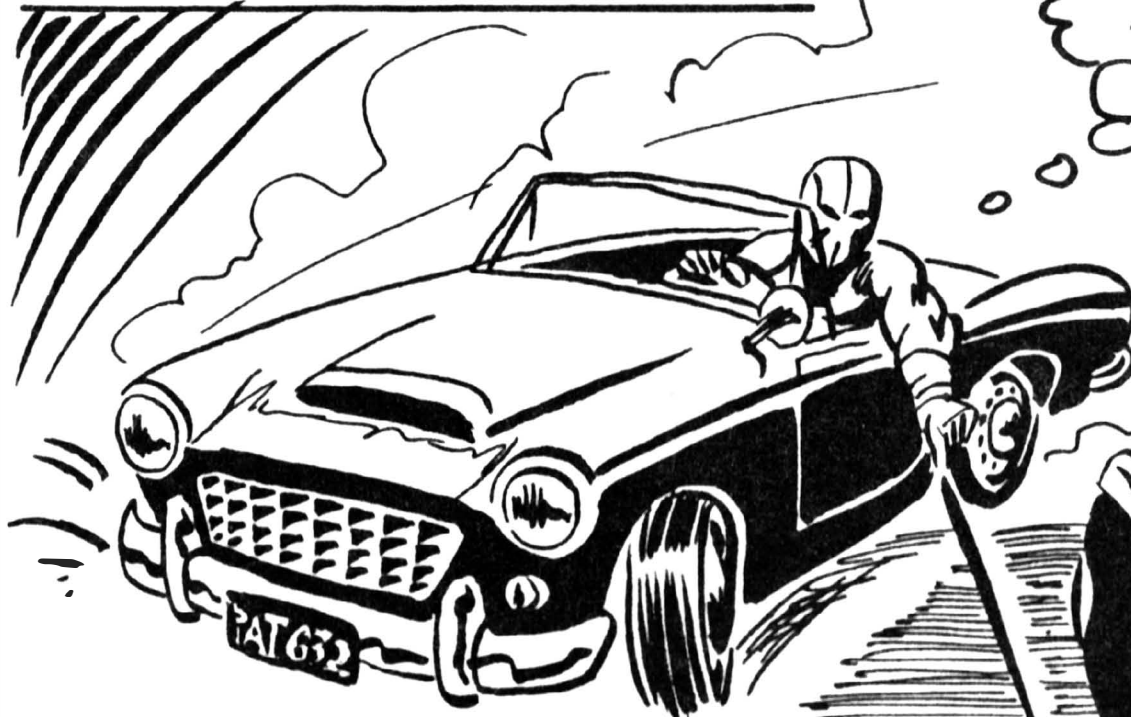
AFTER THE GENERAL HAS LEFT WITH THE DIAGRAMS OF XL ASSEMBLY—

LIEUTENANT, THIS ISN'T THE WAY TO THE AIR BASE! YOU'RE GOING THE WRONG DIRECTION— WHA'... (cough-cough) GAS! (choke)



HE'S OUT! CAN'T STOP NOW— BEING FOLLOWED!!

CLOSING THE GAP, A BEAM OF ENERGY LANCES OUT—



SKREEE

EJ. NOTE: HOLOGRAPH, A THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGE PROJECTED BY LASER WITHOUT A SCREEN.

GOOD THING THE PROFESSOR PLANTED A HOLO\*TRACER IN THE VALISE!

DAMMIT, TIRE BLEW! I'LL HAVE TO ESCAPE ON FOOT!



WHA'— THE VALISE... BURNED!

ZIT

IMPOSSIBLE! AMERIKANER TRICK! THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SUPER—

I HOPE THE RICOCHETS DON'T GET YOU BEFORE I DO!



BEYEOW  
BWE

THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS I'M SAVING YOU FOR A TRIAL!

WOW! WHO ARE YOU, MISTER?

I'M CALLED XL!

AND YOU SURE DO EXCEL!



NEXT DAY, BACK IN THE LAB—

PUBLICITY! WASHINGTON WON'T LIKE THIS!!

I'M SORRY, I THOUGHT IT WOULD—

THOUGHT! YOU'RE NOT PROGRAMMED TO THINK, ONLY COMPUTE AND REACT! HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY THINK?



San Francisco Examiner  
EXCEL FOILS ESPIONAGE  
Top-secret plans buried as hero defeats spy. He wears bullet-proof armor, and says...



Continued from Page 168

introduced in the second Excel strip "Excel Vs. Siren" became a staple of later strips by Howard Chaykin and Frank Miller.

Foss: I'd like to have done lots more with Excel, having barely developed the basis in the first twenty-two pages, which would amount to just a single issue of a comic book.

Bill: You really ended your costumed hero period for all intents and purposes at this point.

Ronn: The last hero-type strip I completed was The Eclipse in 1976.

Bill: Why?

Ronn: I've been turned off doing super-heroes, more or less, after that first decade, though I still like them in moderation. There are far too many other genres for me to concentrate on any single one. My diverse interests are part of the reason I never pursued mainstream comics. I'm too much the free-form person to limit myself artistically, as well as in life. While I'll always have a love for comics art, my passions have expanded widely to include nearly all forms of a visual media.

Bill: For those of us in comic fandom, it seemed like you just kind of disappeared. But by the early 1970s, the amateur zines themselves were being replaced by pro-zines full of art by Frazetta, Williamson and others. You basically dropped out of fandom, right?

Ronn: A lot of fans were becoming ecologically aware at that point, and there didn't seem to be any fannish type of discussion on it. So I began what I first called *The Issue*, and it grew to be *Issues*, which I continued when we moved to Illinois. (*Issues* #1 was dated April 1971, when we were still in California.) I got a job working as a water treatment technician for Central SOYA. It was then that I learned first hand, hands-on, just how bad the globe's water was becoming. *Issues* consisted mainly of letters, reports, news excerpts, and articles dealing with environmentalism. #9, the last issue, is dated September 1974. In



Page from "Excel Vs. Siren" in Star-Studded Comics #17  
"Hard-hitting social relevance in a comics fanzine"

the spring of 1975, we purchased twenty acres in the Ozarks.

Bill: How did you choose the Ozarks?

Ronn: We started reading the *Mother Earth News*, and looked into various situations, such as the original Rainbow Tribe, a commune in Oregon, but their prerequisite of donating everything to the commune was too much for us at the time. Finally, a letter from Cat Yronwode suggested we try the Ozarks. I've been here since, finding the solitude I

sought and increasing mail orders for customized artwork in the process.

Bill: Your second marriage ended about this time, didn't it?

Ronn: That's right. Our marriage lasted ten years almost to the day. Coreen was a wonderful wife, but we came to a parting of the ways when I relished these rustic woods, and she has since gone on to become no less than a nuclear chemist.

Bill: Amazing!





NOW THAT WINTER'S HERE, I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU —

THE FUN OF HOME-MADE SKIS ON A HILL OF SNOW IN FEB.

A SAW THAT WON'T CUT CHAINS, BUT MAKES NICE TOOTHPICKS —

# JOINT VENTURE

Comics/riper  
#15  
©'80  
\$2.50

...DANCES TO SPRING AND FALL...



TRIGGER-HAPPY COWBOY HUNTERS WITH A 6-PAK AND A 12-GA.



AND FEELING LIKE AN INDIAN ABOUT TO



disappear  
MOONDANCE





Ronn: What's really mind-blowing was the fact that it was really Coreen who was so ecologically aware, and kindled my interest in getting back to the land.

*Bill: What's the appeal of the backwoods lifestyle for you?*

Ronn: I've always simply enjoyed nature, like Thoreau, since my childhood on the farm. I enjoy swinging an axe and picking berries. My little patch of woods harbors deer, wild turkey, fox, possum, raccoon, skunk, rabbit, squirrel, snakes and birds of all feathers.

I've discussed this with many who think I have it hard, living out without lots of conveniences and creature comforts, while to me the nine-to-five is the hard way to live. I make do with lots less, but my time is my own from moment to moment, which is most important to me. In the thirty-five years preceding this backwoods life, my senses were assaulted by all the sounds, speed and sights of the city. While some people enjoy the pace, my metabolism is much slower.

If it sounds like a dream life, I hasten to add it's only *my* dream, being also very rustic, raw and rugged, too much so for most women to last more than six months here unless they were raised in this lifestyle. First year here, I even lived with candles and kerosene light, a delight to this night person, though I missed the electricity to power my movie projector and for music.

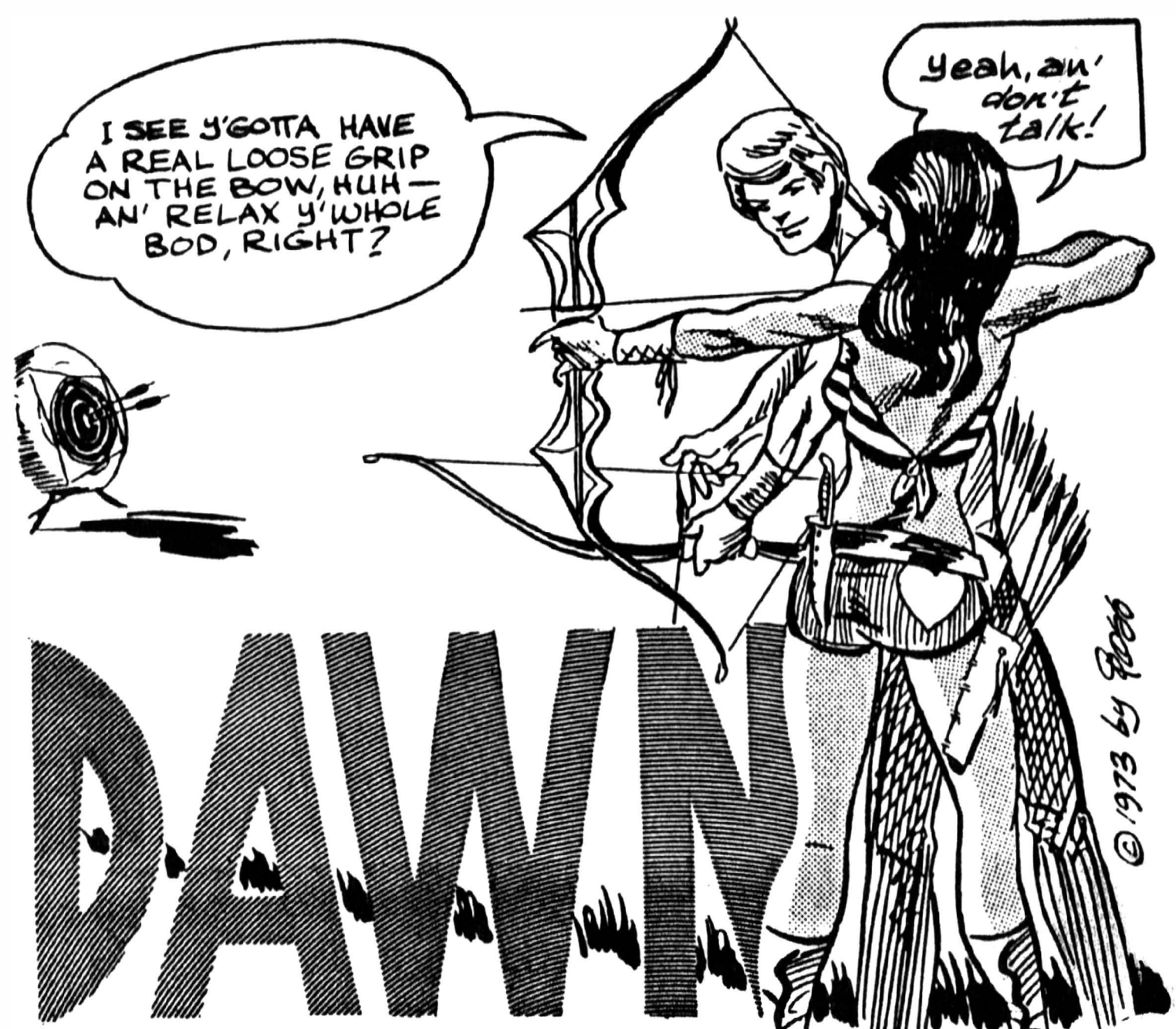
When winter gets serious, I'll have to chop ice for doing dishes and bathing, but I can skate on my road at leisure and marvel at the diamond-covered limbs of trees, or acres of blue-white snow, lit by the moon... virgin except for bird tracks and animal prints. It's both invigorating as well as backbreaking to cut, split and stack wood. It's heaven and it's hell.

*Bill: You call your art-for-hire business Artist X-Press. What type of artwork does this involve?*

Ronn: Most of the initial commissions were for hero-types, and then I began to get requests for adult art, and these

were more often repeat orders. Thus my *CBG* ads over the years have gone from offering "original art" to "personalized exclusive" to "erotic action." The past two years I've had few clients for other than adult art, though one regular customer gets sports scenes and other things as well. Some of my regular customers include a cop, a lawyer, a retired businessman, an astronomer, a NASA computer operator, a female painter, a college student who inks my pencils, a social services rep and many others across the country.

*Bill: Have you kept in touch with anyone from fandom's first decade?*





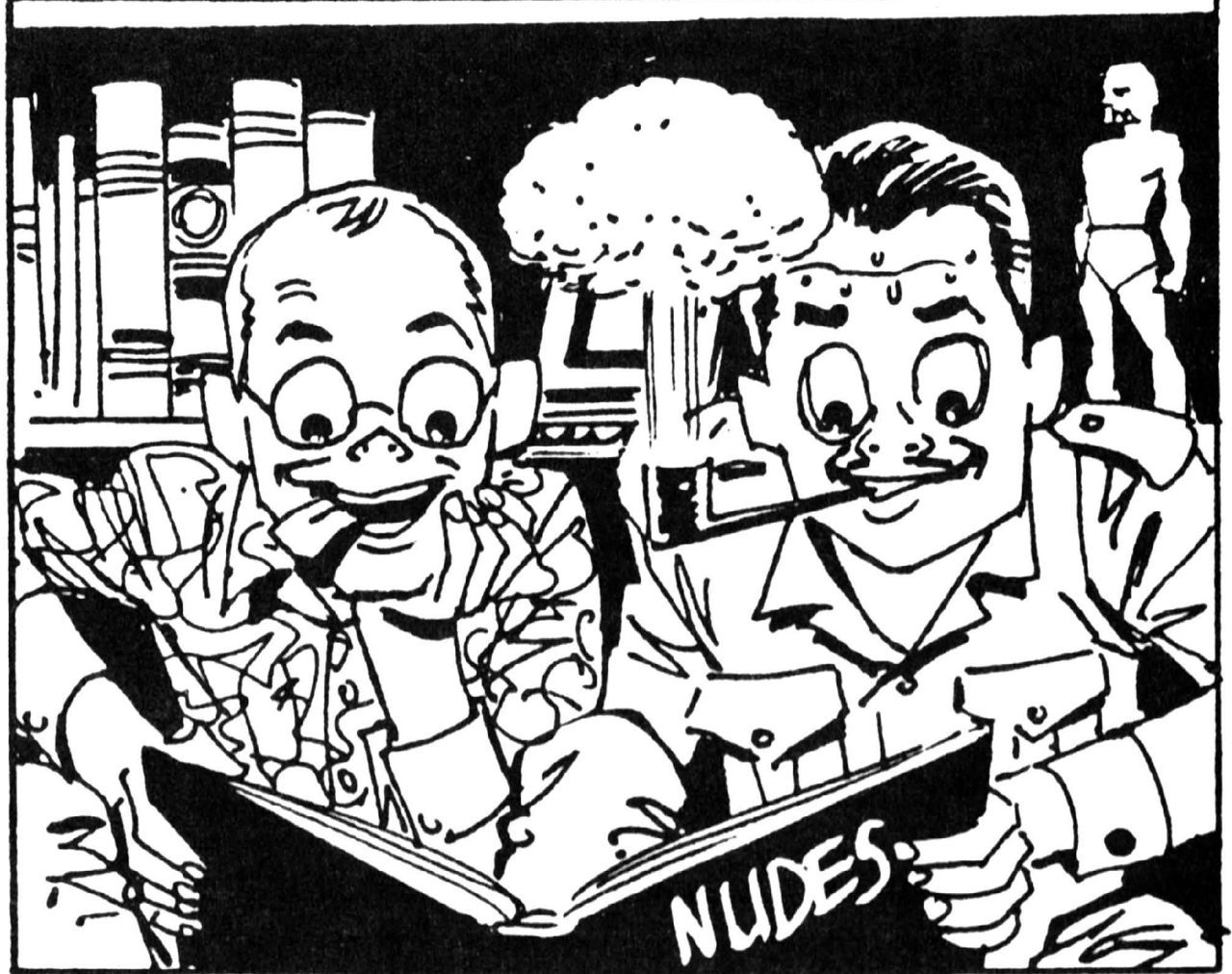
# My Buddy Ronn

BY MIKE VOSBURG

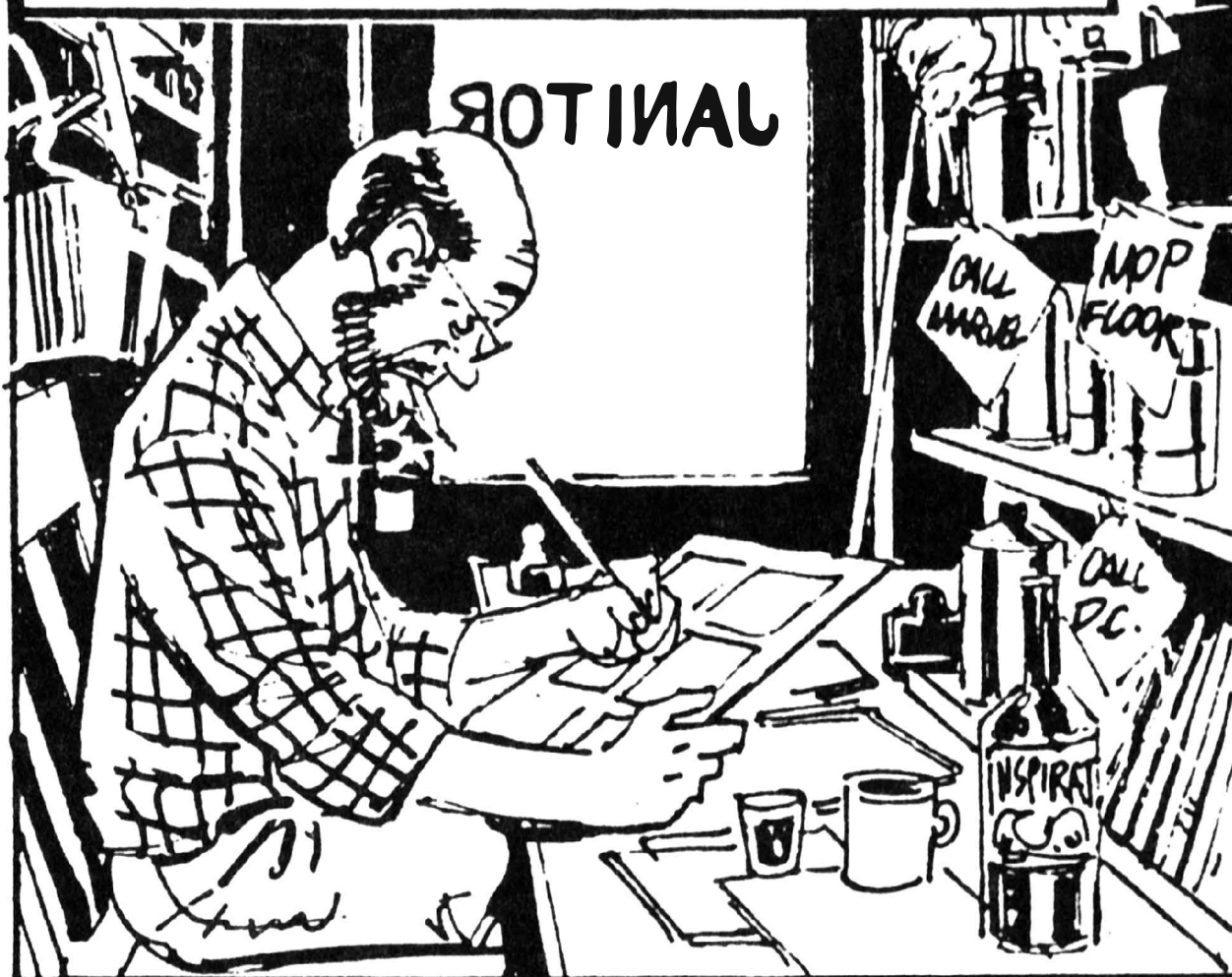
RONN AND I FIRST MET AT JERRY BAILS' ALLEY TALLY IN '63. OUR COLLABORATIONS HAD MADE MY FANZINE A HOT ITEM.



WE WERE 'BROTHERS OF THE BRUSH'. OUR FEW ENCOUNTERS WERE ALWAYS SPENT DISCUSSING THE AESTHETICS OF OUR CRAFT.



I MOVED ON TO A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL, WELL-PAYING CAREER AS A TOP-NOTCH ILLUSTRATOR-CARTOONIST-DRAWER.



ALWAYS THE ACTIVIST, RONN BOUGHT LAND IN MISSOURI AND LIVED THE SPARTAN LIFE OF A HOMESTEADER.

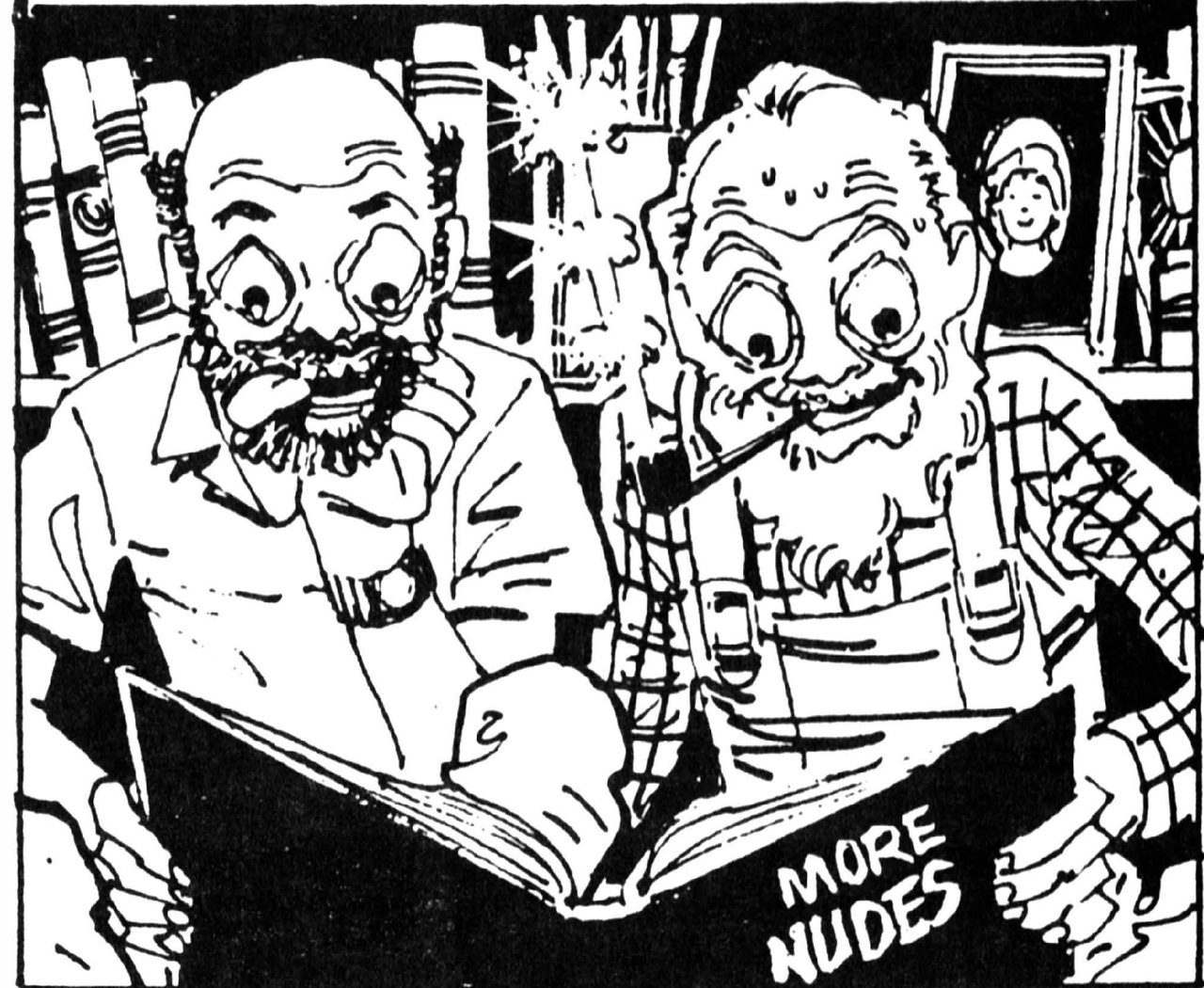


WHILE I NOW WORK IN A GLAMOROUS LA STUDIO...



AND RONN STILL LIVES IN HIS PRIMITIVE OZARK HOME...

AFTER 30 YEARS WE'RE STILL THE CLOSEST FRIENDS. AND WHEN CAN GET TOGETHER OUR INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSIONS STILL GO ON...







Examples of Foss artwork from 1987: splash panels from two uncompleted comic strips.

Ronn: All along I've had continued input and feedback from another of fandom's founders, Mike Vosburg. He and Grass have been my closest friends since the early days. I hear from them every month or two.

Bill: Do you still have much of a comic book collection?

Ronn: Most all my comic collection, what was left of it, was stolen in 1987.

Bill: How did that happen?

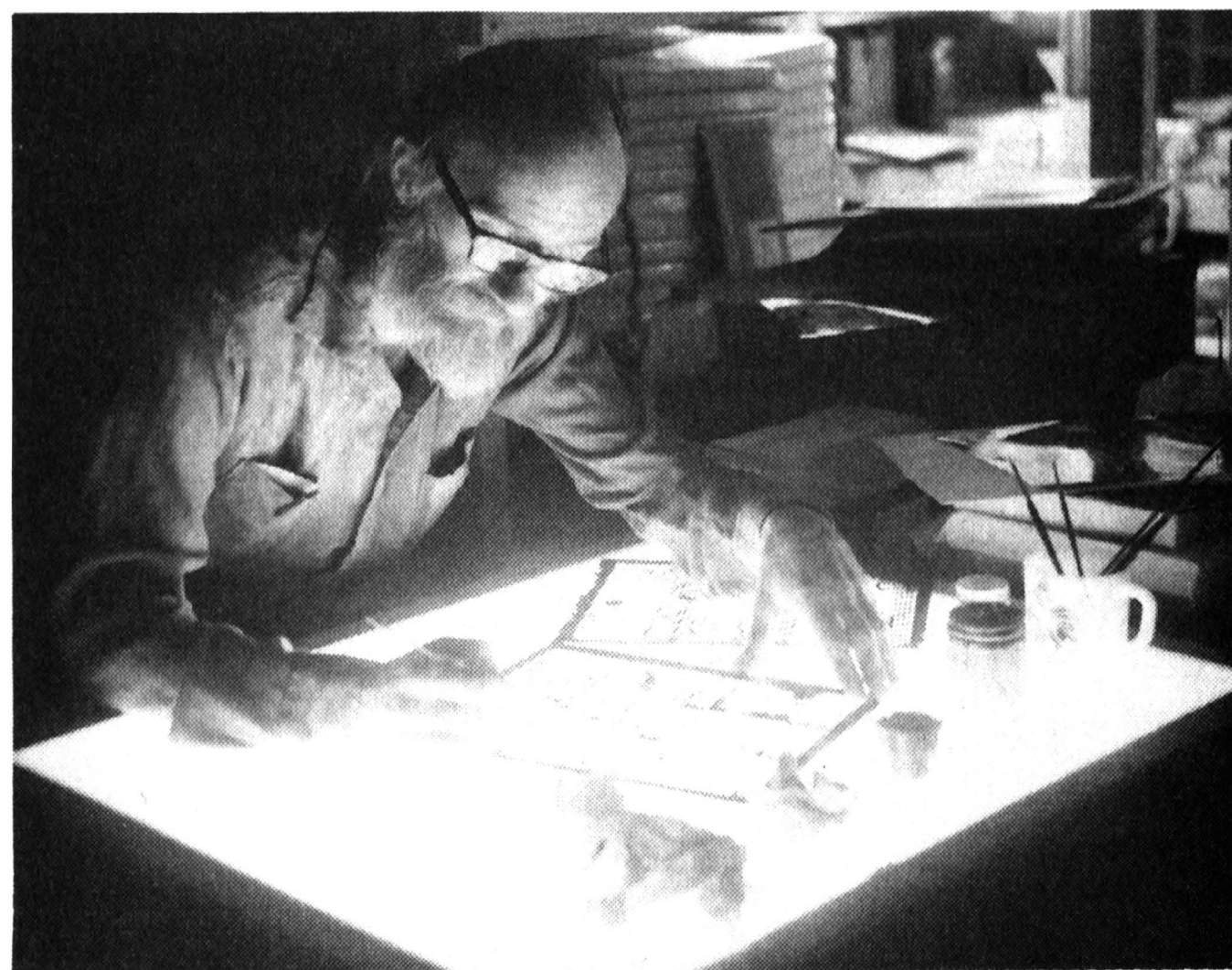
Ronn: I had been working and living in West Plains, Missouri while working for Russ Cochran for the better part of two years. I was opaquing negatives for his *Piracy*, *Valor* and *Psychoanalysis* reprint editions, and working in shipping and receiving. I would return to my little farm about one weekend a month just to revitalize myself.

When I arrived home for a visit one time, I discovered the front door was literally smashed in pieces on its hinges. Two walls of floor-to-ceiling bookshelves had been overturned in my front living room, although none of the books were stolen. I doubt the thieves were readers as I am. My collection of one hundred and fifty records were all gone. Photographs were scattered all over the place, as well as 2,500 name and address index cards.

The worse treatment was in my den. Again, two walls of floor-to-ceiling books and mostly old material—drawings,

stories, letters—had been dumped. It looked like someone had made a very thorough search. My den was literally knee-deep, totally trashed. Windows broken out of pure vandalism.

Stuff that was stolen was really not worth that much. My personal collection of movies, an out-of-print book of ERB illustrations, my comic collection, probably only worth two



Opaquing negatives on Russ Cochran's E.C. reprint books in the late 1980s.





or three thousand dollars. But they couldn't just take what was of obvious value. They just tried to maliciously destroy things. But then, these are the Ozarks, and some of these redneck cowboys down here will do just about anything. I mean, kill relatives, you name it. It's pretty wild.

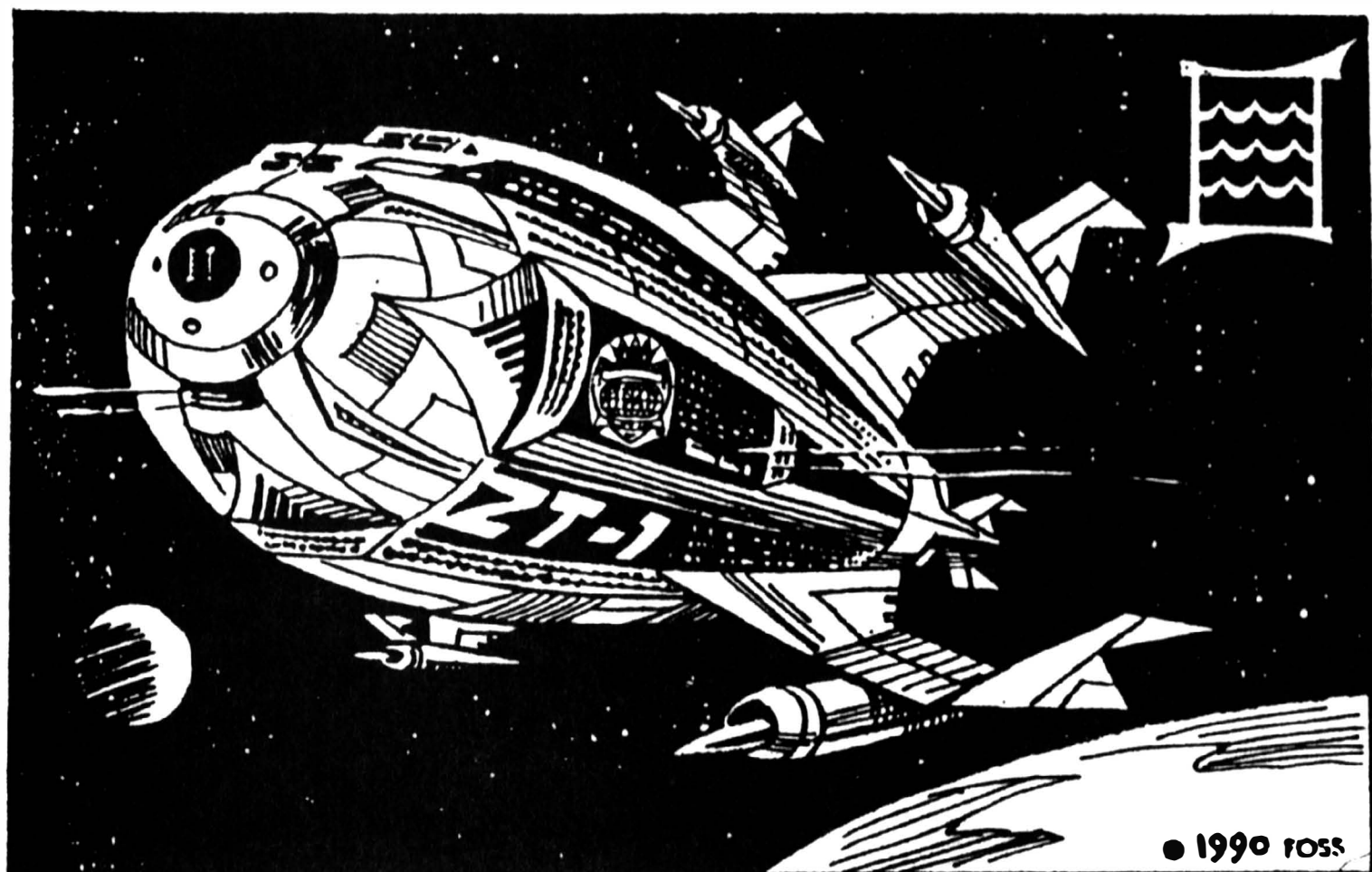
*Bill: That kind of thing is every fan's nightmare. So much of what we have, and value, is so fragile ... and so hard to replace.*

Ronn: It was sickening. I just felt empty. Because there was the better part of thirty years dumped on the floor like a garbage trash heap.

After the theft of my comics and related magazines, I decided to focus on building a video library of favorite films, such as those starring Valentino, Chaplin, Keaton, Bogie, Lorre, Cagney and Mitchum, though primarily science fiction and fantasy. Also, Ernie Kovacs, Steve Allen, many others. On the female side: Garbo, Hedy Lamarr, Ida Lupino, Barbara Rush, Phyllis Kirk, Helena Carter and others. I don't get to theaters any more, but I get to see most of the good stuff on video, though slightly time-delayed.

Ballistics is another of my many interests. Target shooting, rather than hunting, including archery and experimenting with slings and spears, an out growth of my fascination with the medieval age.

*Bill: What kind of work pattern do you follow when you're drawing?*



Commissioned cassette tape art, done for Ocean, the Led Zeppelin Fan Club.

Ronn: As I said, I'm a night person, so I'm frequently up until three or four a.m., and seem to get my best work done after dark. I often play music while drawing, most notably 1950s jazz, Kraftwerk, Chuck Mangioni, Henry Mancini—primarily instrumental.

*Bill: In addition to your Artist X-Press business, what else have you been up to since you were "back to the land" in the mid-seventies?*

Ronn: I've been fortunate in doing a wide variety of interesting works, including editing and publishing the monthly *Your Times X-Press* from 1975 through 1983, over a hundred issues, mostly mimeo and some offset, which at its peak reached one thousand coast-to-coast. It started as a newsletter to help communications among the scattered folk in this area, and ended up reaching a lot of other people interested in the backwoods lifestyle.

Early in 1976, Chris Rock, who'd just started work for Russ Cochran thirty-five miles away, visited and we became close friends, filming together and meeting with Cat Yronwode who lived nearby and a few other local comics enthusiasts, forming the Society for the Appreciation of Graphic Arts, or SAGA.

*Bill: Given the high sexual quotient that your work has often had, are you aware of the current proliferation of sexually explicit comics? Have you considered contributing to these magazines?*

Ronn: I am, and have long been, well aware of the many Good Girl comics put out by Eros and others. And this is why I have had work published in four different issues of *Rip Off Comix*, as well as half of Grass Green's *Sinnin'* #1, "Hobo Hal" pencils. However the work I'm doing for private collectors has most of my time taken up, whereby I can't devote a whole month to do an entire comic book, which seems to be what most publishers want. They don't seem to go in for short stories, which I prefer: six, eight, ten, twelve pages. They want a complete package. While Kathe Todd, editor of *Rip Off*, was always very genial and helpful and considerate, I've had a few bad dealings with some of these publishers and heard a few stories, and I'm not sure I want to get involved. I once submitted a package of about thirty pages to Cat Yronwode, who wrote back, "When you can draw like Frazetta, we'll print it." Well, I don't want to draw like Frazetta!

*Bill: It's a little surprising how much of your work, especially in recent years, has been cartoony or humorous in nature, not what you were known for. Yet it's great stuff!*

Ronn: I credit Grass Green with much of my proclivity for humorous drawing. I love his stuff as much as Kurtzman's and Jack Davis's. As I've



told him, I feel that gag art may be the best, since anything else, no matter how good, is a shadow of life...while humor is what comic strips are about.

*Bill: You seem to especially enjoy caricaturing yourself.*

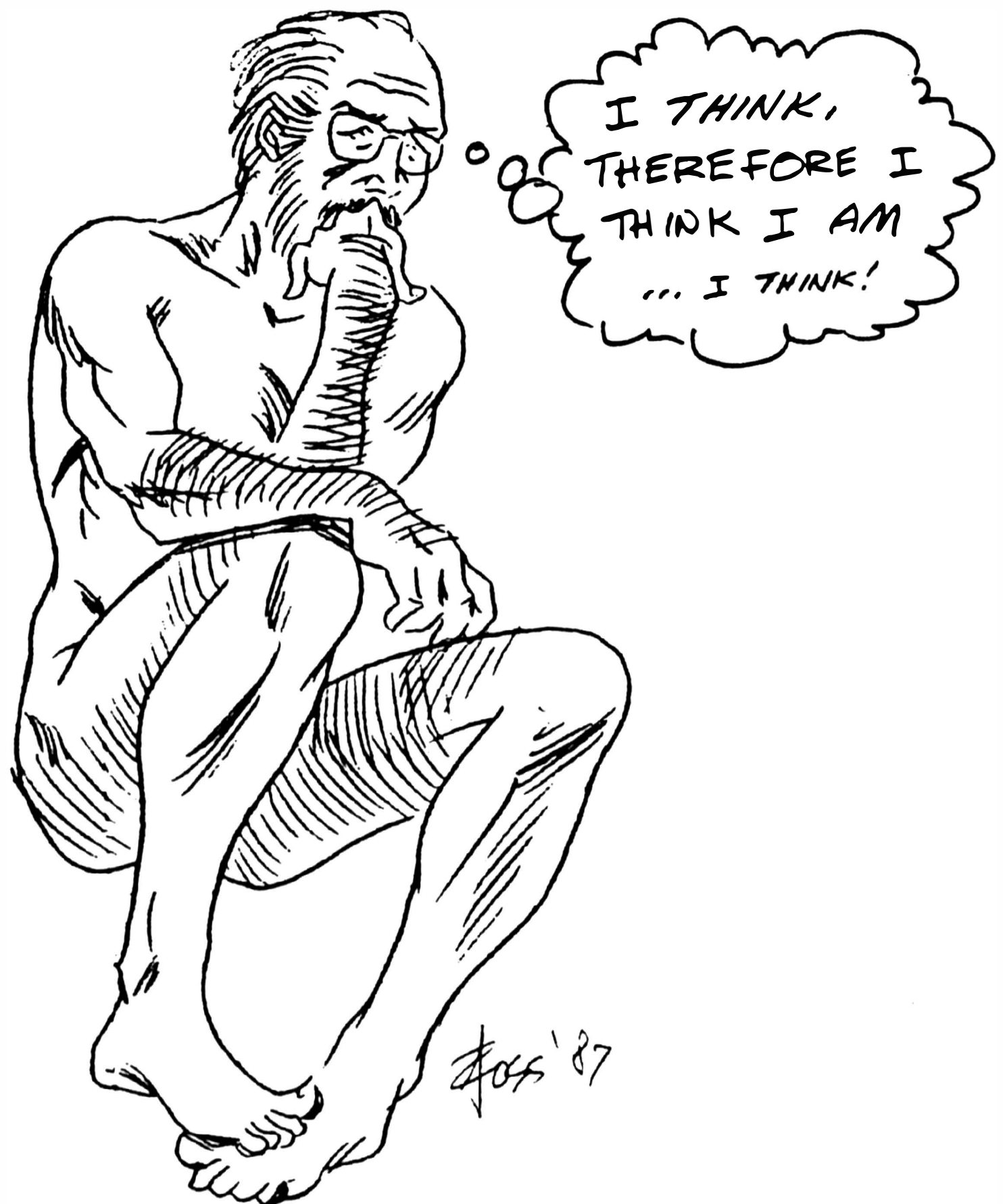
Ronn: I don't mind making an ass of myself. We all are, on occasion!

*Bill: Can you tell us a little about your kids?*

Ronn: I could probably fill a book, talking about my kids. I'm really nuts about them. I have a beautiful twenty-two year old daughter Alexandra Dawn. My son Scott just turned twenty-one. Both are students in Corvallis, Oregon. We were best friends while they were growing up, bosom buddies. I was like a child myself, being with them from ages five and six, when we moved here in 1975, through 1983 when they both began high school in Oregon. I was fortunate enough to be able to share in their wonder, discovery of everything from ants building their tunnels to all the profusion of wildlife we have in the Missouri Ozarks. We did absolutely everything together, from the mundane household chores to the creative things. We were enthralled with Halloween, all three of us. They are really into fantasy, movies, comic books, and costumes. Both are quite adept with the pencil and ink. I can't say enough about them. It was Dawn, my best friend in the world, who wrote a school report saying that creating comics is kind of like giving birth, which is maybe the closest thing we males can come to that process.

*Bill: So in the final analysis, you have ended up making your living from your art talent after all.*

Ronn: While I've been able to make a very modest living illustrating, I don't have the discipline in me like Mike Vosburg to do mainstream comics day in and day out, nor even the determination of Grass Green, who somehow maintains a daily nine-to-five job at an art department, while also still doing lots of comic books through alternative publishers as well. Perhaps I enjoy drawing too much to force it into prescribed molds, and not enough to really work at it for conventional acceptance on a broad



scale. Though neither am I content to continually repeat myself, ever trying to do something at least a little different, if not a lot. My reach has frequently exceeded my grasp and hasn't always been appreciated, but I honestly *do* keep trying. I'll always draw, but that's not all I'm about. Life is too multi-faceted to apply all time and energies to a single focus.

*Bill: Is there anything you like to say to wrap this up?*

Ronn: As I age, I realize that the more I learn, the more there is to learn... and lots I thought I knew, isn't so. One thing is, in the end, aside from the accumulated junk and the love of family and friends, all one really has is memories, which we make for ourselves every day. Thanks for the memories, comicdom!

*Editor's Note: Since Ronn doesn't have a telephone, or attend fan functions, we collaborated to create this interview as a "simulated conversation." In fact, it was constructed primarily from letters Ronn wrote in October 1991, audiotapes from that same period, and from his autobiographical piece which saw print in Capa-beta #1 on a very limited basis. Also, material from various other fanzines was interpolated. We trust you forgive the artistic license we took. Finally, we hasten to add that Ronn's words herein are, his own—and have been reviewed by him prior to publication.*

Bill Schelly, 11/19/91

-end-





My art is my mistress, my partner, my mate.  
She's my pleasure, and sometimes my pain  
When I know she can be better but isn't,  
Even after all I try to help her.

She's my consolation in times of gloom,  
And my glory when we're both at our best.  
She lets me down only when I let her down,  
And picks me up when I feel I can't go on any longer.

She's my baby, birthed in ages past  
Of trial and error and retrial and success,  
The sweat of my brow, conceived in my depths.

She's as fluid as my own fantasies,  
At times a queen, at other times a harlot,  
My joy and my sorrow, my delight and despair.

She comes to me in the quiet night  
And stirs my soul to activity,  
Taunting me with her beauty and haunting allure.

She's my life and she knows it!  
Long after I'm gone my love will still be  
Seducing others.

*For - 91 ©*



# Ronn Foss "STRIPOGRAPHY"



Foss drawing from  
his stationery ca. 1963

## Strips drawn for Spirit Duplicator [Ditto]

*Note: Script and art by Ronn Foss  
unless otherwise noted.*

Title: "Dimension Man Vs. Dr.  
Demon - Part One"  
Starring: Dimension Man (origin)  
Written by: Parley Holman  
Fanzine: *Spotlite* #1 (1961)  
Pages: 5

Title: "The Wheel That Menaced  
Washington"  
Starring: Little Giant (origin)  
Written by: S. G. Ross (Steve Gerber)  
Fanzine: *Headline* #1 (1962)  
Pages: 8

Title: "Dimension Man Vs. Dr.  
Demon - Part Two"  
Starring: Dimension Man  
Written by: Dean Newman  
Fanzine: *Spotlite* #2 (1962)  
Pages: 7

Title: "Terror in the Big Top"  
Starring: The Viper (origin)  
Fanzine: *Komix Illustrated* #5 (1962)  
Pages: 10  
Reprint: *Giant Labors of Love* (2000)

Title: "Origin of the Cowl"  
Starring: The Cowl  
Written by: Mike Vosburg  
Fanzine: *Masquerader* #1 (1962)  
Pages: 7

Title: "Dimension Man Vs. Dr.  
Demon - Part Three: Trapped in the 4<sup>th</sup>  
Dimension"  
Starring: Dimension Man  
Written by: Steve Perrin  
Fanzine: *Spotlite* #3 (1963)  
Pages: 9

Title: "Limbo"  
Fanzine: *Wild* #10 (1964)  
Pages: 1  
Reprint: *Alter Ego* Vol. 3 #4 (2000)

Title: "The Plan of Spy X"  
Starring: The Viper  
Written by: Mickey Martin  
Fanzine: *Komix Illustrated* #11 (1964)  
Pages: 9

Title: "Velvet of Venus!"  
Starring: Dimension Man  
Fanzine: *Fighting Hero Comics* #12  
Pages: 8  
Reprint: *Giant Labors of Love* (2000)

Title/Starring: The Fox  
Fanzine: *Dateline: Comictim* #5 - 12  
(1964-1965)  
(Serialized in 2-part chapters)  
Pages: 16

Title: "Child of Clay"  
From: Jimmy Rogers song  
Fanzine: *Capa-alpha* #43, re-drawn  
for *Sense of Wonder* #7 (1969)  
Pages: 5

*Continued....*



# DAWN 9 : SEA-GOD! <sup>3/12</sup>

©84  
FOSS



Third of 12-part Foss serial that appeared in Comic Fandom Advertiser (1985)



## Strips drawn for Photo Offset reproduction

*Note: Script, pencils & inks by Ronn Foss unless otherwise noted.*

Title: "The Eclipse"  
Starring: The Eclipse (origin)  
Written by: Drury Moroz  
Fanzine: *Alter Ego* #5 (1963)  
Pages: 10  
Reprint: *Fandom's Finest Comics* Vol. 1 (1997)

Title: "A Gathering of Heroes!"  
Starring: The Liberty Legion  
Written by: Larry Herndon & Buddy Saunders  
Fanzine: *Star-Studded Comics* #4 (1964)  
Pages: 4  
Reprinted in: *Fandom's Finest Comics* Vol. 1 (1997)

Title: "Return of the Nebula!"  
Starring: The Cowl  
Written by: Mike Vosburg  
Fanzine: *Masquerader* #6 (1964)  
Pages: 6

Title: "Solano the Brave"  
Starring: Solano the Brave  
Fanzine: *Voice of Comidom* (1965)  
Several episodes

Title: "Undercover"  
Starring: Jim 'Laser' Beam  
Fanzine: *Voice of Comicdom* (1965)

Title: "Belle Starr, First Woman in Space"  
Starring: Bell Starr  
Fanzine: *All Stars* #1 (1965)  
Pages: 12

Title: "Introducing The Highwayman"  
Starring: The Highwayman  
Fanzine: *The Cartoonist* #1 (1965)  
Pages: 7

Title: "The Mystery of Malimoor!"  
Starring: The Eclipse  
Written by: Drury Moroz  
Fanzine: *Alter Ego* #8 (1965)  
Pages: 9  
Reprinted in: *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine* (1997)

Title: "The Origin of the Black Phantom"  
Starring: Black Phantom & Wraith  
Written by: Steve Perrin  
Fanzine: *Fantasy Illustrated* #6 (1966)  
Pages: 13

Title: "The Fox Returns"  
Starring: The Fox - Scott Storm  
Fanzine: *Gosh Wow!* #1 (1967)  
Pages: 16

Title: "Excel, Man of the Future"  
Starring: Excel  
Fanzine: *Star-Studded Comics* #14 (1968)  
Pages: 4

Title: "Excel Vs. Siren!"  
Starring: Excel  
Fanzine: *Star-Studded Comics* #17 (1969)  
Pages: 8

Title: "What's It All About?"  
Starring: Excel  
Fanzine: *Electric Stories* #1 (1971)  
Pages: 10

Title: "Witch Hunt!"  
Starring: The Eclipse  
Written by: Ronn & Coreen Foss  
Fanzine: *Comic Crusader* #12 (1971)  
Pages: 10

Title: "Whatsoever Man Soweth"  
Fanzine: *Mythos* (1972)  
Pages: 5

Title: "Nature Girl"  
Fanzine: *Art* 2/3 (1974)  
Pages: 6

Title: "Volsung Saga"  
Adapted by: Coreen Casey  
Lettered by: Cat Yronwode  
Fanzine: *Fantasy Crossroads* (1975)  
Pages: 8

Title: "Skyline Robbers"  
Starring: The Eclipse  
Written by: Martin L. Greim  
Inks: Gary Kato  
Fanzine: *Comic Crusader Storybook* (1976)  
Reprinted: *Fandom's Finest Comics* Vol. 2 (1998)  
Pages: 8

Title: "Dawn"  
Starring: Dawn  
Fanzine: *Comic Fandom Advertiser* (1985)  
Single-page chapters over several issues

Title/Starring: Destiny, Vampire Mermaid  
Magazine: *Scary Monsters* - #15-38  
Pages: 4-6 page stories  
Note: Recently, a series of Destiny prose stories authored by Foss had also appeared in *Scary Monsters*.

*Editor's Note: This list does not include Ronn's unpublished works, and also leaves out his work in underground comix assisting Grass Green (Sinnin #1 etc.).*

-end-



## 5 – New in the *Comic Fandom Reader*

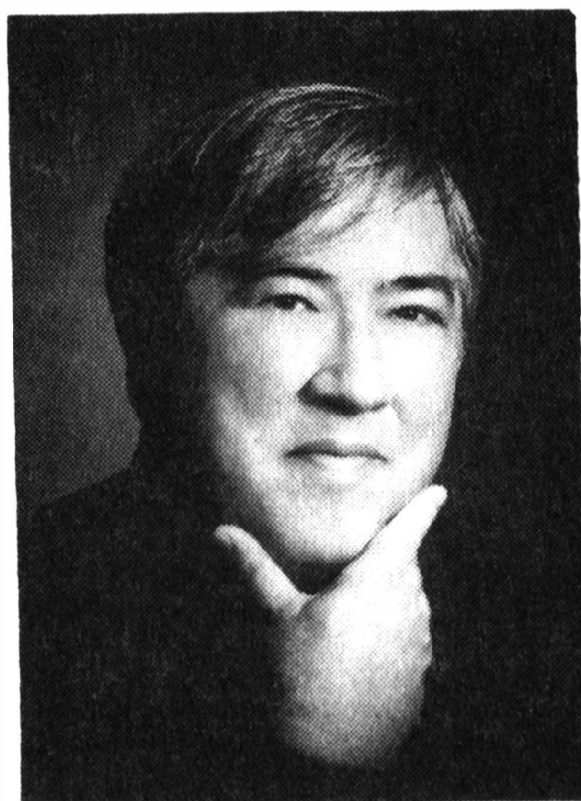
Just about all the text features in this book saw print somewhere else before, in everything from widely circulated fan magazines like *Comics Interview*, to ultra-limited circulation contributions distributed as part of *Capa-alpha*, which has just forty members at any one time. Or, large portions of them were used as part of *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* or some other Hamster Press publication. Not so, the three items in this—the fifth and final section of the *Reader*.

### **Confessions of an Unrepentant Portland Comic Book Collector** by Malcolm Willits

I've been sitting on Malcolm's beguiling "confessional" for several years, waiting for the right place to publish it. I've long lamented the lack of memoirs from both professional writers and artist in comics, and comic book fans and collectors of earlier eras. His piece provides much to fill the gap in the latter area. It's so brimming with personality and humor that it's virtually an object lesson on how entertaining and informative such a memoir can be.

Originally a high school history and English teacher, Malcolm and his friend Leonard Brown opened a store specializing in rare comic books and pulp magazines in 1965. Called Collectors Book Store and still located in Hollywood, California, at 6225 Hollywood Boulevard, it now deals exclusively in movie and TV collectibles such as stills, posters, lobby cards, magazines and scripts.

Now semi-retired with his new partner Mark Willoughby mainly holding down the fort, Malcolm increasingly devotes his time to writing. His new hardcover novel, *The Wonderful Edison Time Machine*, was recently voted "Remainder of the Year" by the Booksellers of America. He is presently working on two children's books: *The Adventures of Pee Pee and Poo Poo*, two Eskimo



Malcolm Willits

children adrift on an ice floe, and *The Adventures of Grungy and Mungy*, the story of two Third World children who live on top of a garbage dump.

### **They Came From Clam Gulch!** by Nils Osmar

The second and by far the briefest of these new pieces is this pleasant recollection of Nils' days as one of Marvel's preeminent letter-writers—or, to use fan parlance, letterhacks. I've been urging Nils to write something on this subject since I met him, back in 1995. But, somehow the right place to print it didn't present itself until now.

I couldn't imagine the article without some examples of his correspondent "skill", and so we have three letters printed completely—and I applaud him for having the courage to allow these remnants of his younger self to be presented here in all their youthful glory.

By the way, if you recognize Nils' name, it may be because he's done the coloring for most of the covers of Hamster Press books and comics. Our meeting on the eve of the publication of the first edition of *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* is one of the most fortuitous events in my life. He came to my rescue then, and has been an invaluable contributor to my projects ever since. On a personal level, we've

become firm friends, and I expect to be working with him for a long time to come. Nils is a multi-talented fellow: a superb science fiction writer, an accomplished comic book artist and fine arts painter, and an expert with Adobe Photoshop and other computer graphics programs. In the past six months, he's branched out into the challenging worlds of television production and computer animation.

### **Fanzines By Year** by Bill Schelly

This feature comes with its own separate introduction. It is, I guess, a sort of answer to the many fans who have asked if I was going to publish a fanzine index, or perhaps a fanzine price guide. This is the best I can do in that regard.

It may appear that the choice of fanzine covers reproduced lacks rhyme or reason. In a sense, that's true. The covers to a great many of the most prominent fanzine issues have already been reproduced in other places. Therefore, I decided to try to avoid much duplication with the past, merely in the interest in providing variety and something new to look at.

However, there was a qualifying factor: how well a cover would reproduce when greatly reduced in size. I chose mainly fanzines printed via professional photo offset, with cover images in black-and-white. These, I reasoned (and I think the result bears me out) would look pretty good when reduced to the size allowable in this book.

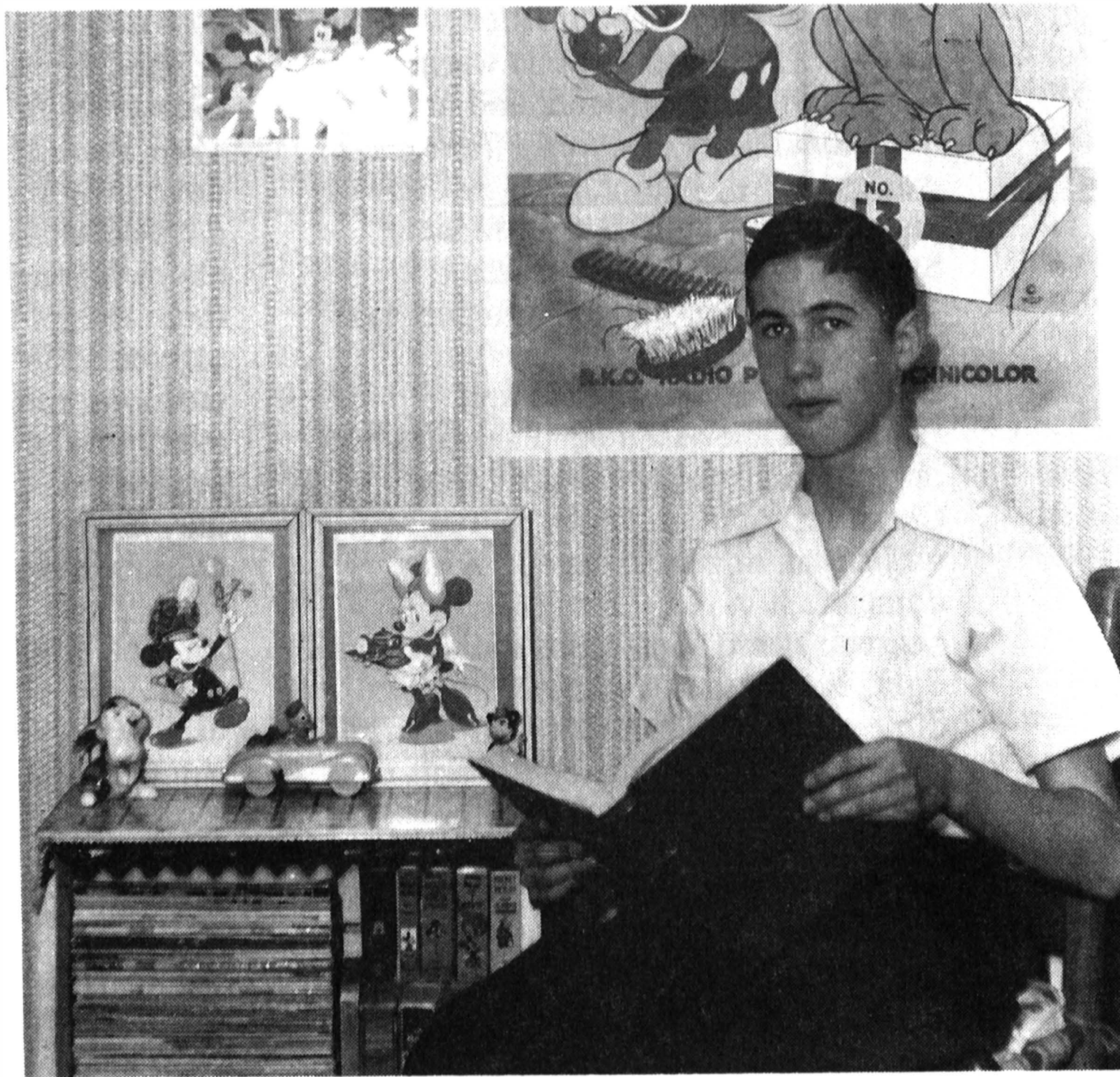
In an effort to enhance whatever value this list may have, I've also appended an "alpha" list of fanzine titles; that way, if you want to know if a certain fanzine is even *on* the year-by-year list, you can easily find out.

By the way, if anyone has fanzines that aren't in the Comic Fandom Archive—I would most certainly like to make a permanent home for them, if you'd care to make a donation.

– Bill Schelly



# ***Confessions of an Unrepentant Portland Comic Book Collector***



***By Malcolm Willits***

*Photo: The author in June 1948 with his Disney  
Collection which he began in late 1945.*



**A**s I approach the ending period of my life and realize my generation may be the last to receive munificent sums from the meager amounts we have paid into Social Security, I regret that had my youth not been so misspent, I might today face the prospect of living high off the hog on more than just income derived from the back-breaking labor of our younger generations.

Because I could have made it on my own. In fact I nearly did. This was because I collected Golden Age comic books *during* the Golden Age. Yes, the very comic books that today sell for ten, twenty, even a hundred thousand dollars *a piece*. I was there when they were ten cents each, and I collected them.

I hid them from my mother, who was a noted Oregon composer and threw everything out if it did not have an immediate purpose. I hid them from my older brother, who was a Golden Gloves champion and used me as his punching bag. And I hid them from my father, who for ten years vainly tried to save the world through being an Oregon state legislator.

I could have been rich. And I would have been, had it not been for God and the Methodist Church. No spot, not even Portland, Oregon, is too insignificant for their wrath. Read my story and take heed.

To have best appreciated *and* collected comic books in Portland, Oregon, during their Golden Age, one should have been born in 1924. That way the person would be sixteen years old at the height of their greatest success, namely 1940. Sure, comic books may have been even more colorful and glorious in 1941 and 1942, but somehow 1940 really established them.

A 16-year-old kid in 1940 could appreciate *all* the comic books, from the newspaper comic strip reprint titles such as *Ace*, *King*, and *Famous Funnies*, to the emerging Super Hero titles. The specialty "funny animal" titles such as *Looney Tunes*, *New Funnies*, and *Walt Disney's Comics* were still a year away, and most sixteen-year-olds would have disdained them anyway as being aimed at kids. But in 1940 our mythical teenager could be regally entertained with comic heroes such as Superman, Green Lantern, Batman, Captain America, and the Human Torch, all aimed as his own age group. And if these were not enough, there were a host of other fascinating

characters appearing every month in *Planet Comics*, *Jungle Comics*, *Jumbo Comics*, and a tidal wave of others. My point is that a sixteen-year-old kid in 1940, even though this was still a Depression year, could have afforded at least some of the new comic books that were appearing. And what is perhaps even more important, he might have been old enough to *save* them.

Now I was born in February of 1934, which means I was only six years old in 1940. So I can't write a definitive history of what it was like to read and collect comic books during their Golden Age. But I do have certain recollections from having grown up in Portland at the time, which I'd like to share with you.

First of all, my father did not approve of comic books. This may have had as much to do with their price as with their content, as all his life my dad thought a dime was a big deal. He did, however, have his own pre-Bretton Woods exchange rate in which a dime was worth one mowed lawn or sawdust hopper filled with sawdust. The latter kept us warm in good old soggy Portland, and me in an occasional copy of *Looney Tunes*. Dad was especially adamant against any of his money going to buy Defense Stamps (later called War Stamps), something I was expected to purchase each week in school or risk being called a supporter of Tojo and Hirohito. Dad based his principles not only upon frugality but also upon Christian pacifism, and it is true he was a man of peace, except in his domestic life. He was a YMCA Secretary, and sometimes money was tight, but Mother would slip me a dime each week to buy a War Stamp so I would not be labeled the only fascist attending Gregory Heights grade school.

No, my father was not a lover of comic books. One time when I was eight years old and earnestly perusing a copy of *Porky Pig and the Secret of the Haunted House*, Dad held it up for condemnation. He did the same thing six years later when I was enjoying a 1931 *Amazing Stories Quarterly*. It had a story by Stanton A. Coblentz which featured domesticated animals on the moon called "moon calves." "Moon calves" Dad snorted derisively. This from a man who would return from church every Sunday with garish pamphlets containing even more outlandish stories about pillars of salt, trumpets tearing down walls, and

talking bushes. This I was supposed to believe, but not in moon calves. I had already formed the opinion that future archeologists, in digging up our present world, would have far greater cause to believe there had really been a Superman, or Plastic Man, or Tarzan, than we have today in believing in the murky origins of Christianity. But I kept my feelings to myself, as dental insurance was unknown at the time.

In 1947 Dad's derision led to desecration. I had my collection in the basement of our house on N.E. 76<sup>th</sup>, and water began to seep in during a storm. My table model Victrola on the floor was threatened, so Dad reached for the closest thing to prop it up. That thing happened to be my precious copy of *Mickey Mouse the Mail Pilot*, a 1933 Big Little Book which was thereby ruined.

I trust you are beginning to see that growing up in a conservative Methodist home and not managing to be contaminated was a major undertaking. I even had a subscription to *Walt Disney's Comics*. How that slipped through I'll never know, but I remember in particular the February 1941 issue arriving. I instantly began devouring it on the davenport. In those days comic books were sixty-four pages in length with hardly an ad in them except for the back covers which offered such items as whoopee cushions and vomit plaques. Most every boy of the period desperately needed one or more such things, and they were as indispensable to our lives as guns and syringes are to the present generation.

You could spend an *entire* day with *one* comic book then. And it was something just for you. No adults would be caught dead with one. This is why so few of the comic books survived. It was a rite of passage to throw away your comic books once you reached a certain age and discovered that girls could serve more purposes than throwing dirt clods at. Truly it was an *event* to get a comic book then. You really appreciated it. I remember in the spring of 1942 my mother and I flew to Cleveland, Ohio, to attend my grandfather's funeral. One day while there I actually got *three* new comic books. It was the day of the funeral and one of my aunts said my grandfather had ascended to one place, and another aunt said he had descended to another. I felt that by asking questions I could con my way into a comic book. When I got *three* I



was in hog heaven and cared not a whit *where* my grandfather ended up.

A few months later we returned to Portland, and I flew back with all the comic books I had accumulated safely on my lap. I had thirty or so of them, one of which was *Pluto Saves the Ship*. This was wartime and all the window curtains had to be tightly drawn upon departures and landings, lest some foreign spy observe the gun emplacements which were not there. I complied with this, but still my patriotism was called into account, as was the transportation of these comic books truly vital to the war effort? I persevered by personally promising to poke Hitler in the eye, if ever I should meet him.

Like I said, I had a subscription to *Walt Disney's Comics*. It cost one dollar a year. But all the rest of the stuff that flowed into our home was pure garbage. Things like *The Christian Century*, *The Progressive*, *The Nation*, and *Parent's Magazine*. My grandparents had given me a millennium subscription to *Junior Natural History Magazine* without first checking to see if I had an interest in natural history (I didn't). Another relative gave me a subscription to *Children's Activities*. It must have come for ten years. Even at the age of six I marveled that something could be so bad. It was clearly aimed at those still in the womb. Even publications by Dorothy Day of the Catholic Workers Movement choked our mailbox. Dad thought she was a saint. I thought she was a Communist.

Why couldn't my parents have taken *Life* or *Look* or *Colliers* or *The Saturday Evening Post*? Why couldn't they have let in some fresh air? I'd even have liked a subscription to *The National Geographic*. Our dentist had copies in his waiting room going back to 1912, and it was through its pages I learned for certain I was male. But no, the world with all its imperfections was not allowed within our door. Some years later Mother boycotted Ingrid Bergman movies because she ran off with Roberto Rossellini. Dad fell into church every time the door was open, and pried them open when they weren't.

I keep digressing. This is supposed to be an article on comic books. Well, I want to show you the environment from which I came. But as to comic books, I remember as a child being enthralled by their covers on the newsstands. Many seemed to feature

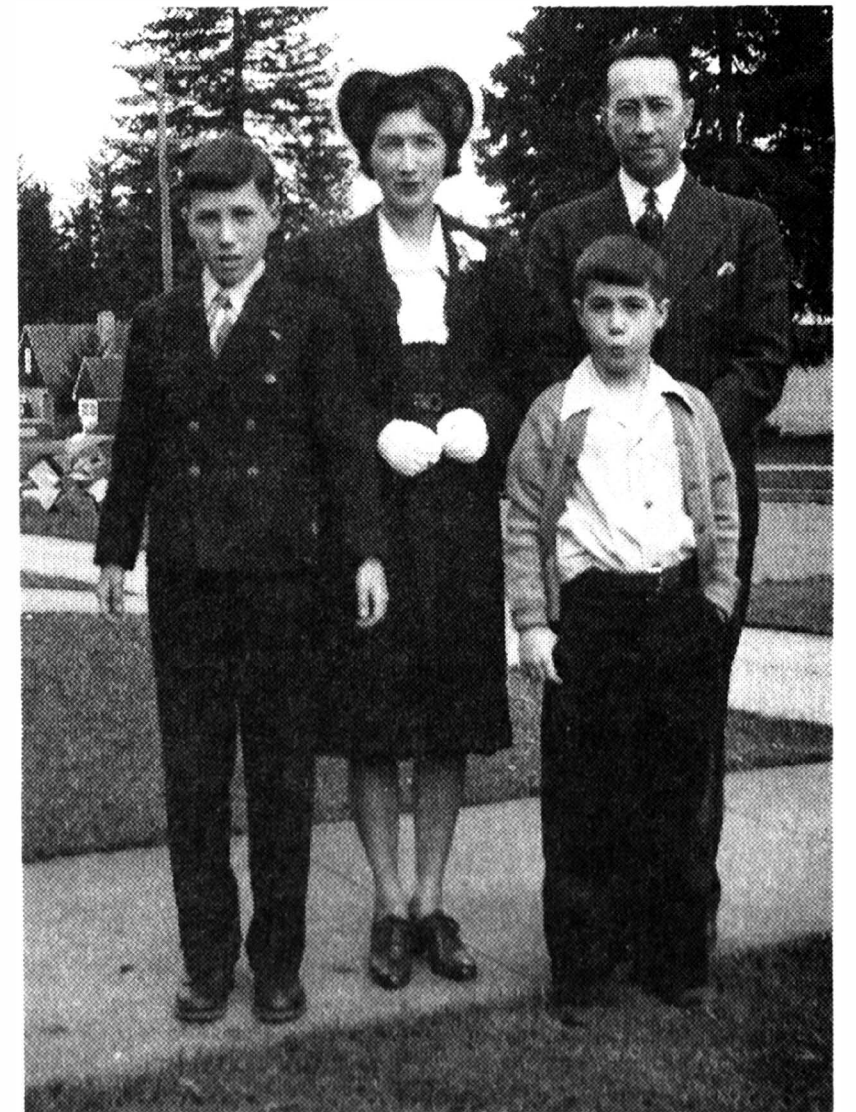
giants looming over threatened cities. I loved giants and would eagerly look inside to see what these giants were doing. I knew what I would do if I were a giant. I would tramp so hard on Willie Beehler and other neighborhood Cro-Magnons not even a bloodstain would be left.

But invariably there were no giants in the inside pages. The covers were *symbolic*. I felt cheated. They were hardly worth swiping from Fairley's Drug Store at 72nd and Sandy. I also remember how *Batman* and *Superman* comic books would have long written introductions to their stories. It was tedious to read them, but it made me feel more adult-like to wade my way through. I didn't actually *buy* such comic books, but they were always available at friends' homes. I liked *Batman* more than *Superman* because *Batman* could at least theoretically be hurt, while *Superman's* bravery didn't amount to much because he couldn't be harmed. That's why Kryptonite was invented. *Superman* had to be vulnerable to more than just the machinations of Lois Lane to be a hero.

To most parents one comic book was much the same as any other. I remember being ill in bed in early 1943 and giving my mother careful instructions regarding the type of comic book she should buy for me. My instructions were as detailed as the later Allied invasion of Normandy, but when my mother returned, all she had for me was a copy of *Jingle Jangle Comics*.

*JINGLE JANGLE COMICS?* Why didn't she go all the way and buy me a copy of *Calling All Girls*? *Nobody* read *Jingle Jangle Comics*. Why they ever published it was a complete mystery. They used to give them away at Saturday matinees at the Roseway Theater, and even then half the kids would turn them down. This was the culmination of nine years of insular living in a Methodist home. I realized then I had to get out.

I mentioned *Superman* and *Batman* comics above. But it was *Captain Marvel* comics I really loved. Perhaps it was my growing enthusiasm for science fiction which led me to appreciate it. *Captain Marvel* comics had no lengthy introductions. This was probably because its editors doubted any of its fans could read. And while the fans of *Superman* and *Batman* could look up to their heroes, a rock could feel superior to *Captain Marvel*. It must



After church, 1942 or 1943. Brother Sherwood at left, mother, father, with Malcolm in front.

have taken "Cap" a year just to learn the word "Shazam." And talk about stupidity: Dr. Sivana could wreck half the Earth each issue and *Captain Marvel* would let him go if he promised to reform. Even a lowly worm, Dr. Mind, managed to best this super hero for most of 1943. But the artwork was clean and it was one of the few comic books that improved as the years went by.

It was especially gratifying that the *Captain* had no love life. This was because *Captain Marvel* was really Billy Batson, a teenage radio announcer too young to be interested in the facts of life. But even as *Captain Marvel*, no one seemed interested in the "Big Red Ox." Sivana's daughter always had the good sense to spurn him. It is true that *Batman* also never had a love life, but at least there was the *Catwoman*, whose very name and sexy appearance indicated possibilities. For *Captain Marvel* there was nothing, which was just what the kids wanted. Lois Lane was a pain, and everybody knew it. Having a woman cluttering up a comic book was too much like living at home or being in the classroom where the girls got the better grades. In those days women were solely for rescuing or helping across the street. All you asked in return was to have your bed made and a well-cooked meal.

Since my father was a Democrat, there was no moral teaching in the home. I therefore had to scrap together what values that I could by reading



comic books and going to movies. Comic books were great for simple morals, as every page is permeated with the idea that justice could easily triumph over evil through the administration of a swift sock to the jaw. It bothered me that to be successful in this endeavor one was expected to keep one's identity secret. I felt it would be more fun to communicate your heroism to the entire world. Then too, you were expected to wear an elaborate costume excessively tight and revealing in the crotch. Considering what I had to reveal in this department, I came to agree that it would be better to remain anonymous if I ever did someday acquire cosmic powers.

Most of the Carl Barks short Donald Duck stories from 1943 on contained thinly-disguised moral values not much different than the parables of Jesus or the celebrated fables of Aesop. So with other comic books I could beg, borrow, or steal, I was gradually acquiring a sort of second-hand philosophy as I advanced in years. I could always sneak comic books into my house, if necessary, but attending movies was a much more formidable task.

In those pre-TV and Blockbuster days, movies required an extended leave of absence of sometimes three or more hours—hours that had to be accounted for. Several times I told my parents I was mapping the Prescott Woods that began two blocks down the street from where we lived. This worked until the day they asked to see my map.

My brother, as usual, was no help. I remember in the summer of 1943 he reluctantly agreed to take me along with some of his hoodlum friends to see *Sahara* as the price of seeing it himself. We were hardly out of sight before they appropriated the few coins I held tightly in my fist.

Since I was now without funds, they had no recourse except to place me in a nearby derelict barn, where I soon heard strange noises and took refuge in its cupola. There I remained, petrified with fear, until my brother and his friends returned smelling of popcorn and Milk Duds to retrieve me. I knew better than to tell my father, as he was already engrossed in a campaign to save the street urchins in Naples. And my brother was not finished with me yet.

I mentioned *Parent's Magazine* a while back. It was the bane of every kid's existence. It had the effrontery to

tell parents how to raise their kids. The fact that it failed miserably can be proven by succeeding generations. It was part of the cesspool that was our mailbox. It was especially damaging in that it *rated movies*. And naturally it gave abysmal ratings to all the movies I wanted to see. Ordinarily this wouldn't have been so bad, as by the time the movie I wanted to see reached my neighborhood theater, that particular issue that rated it had been thrown away. But my older brother would retrieve these issues from the wastebasket and save them until it was time to strike.

The time to strike always came when a *Frankenstein*, a *Wolfman*, or a *Maria Montez* film was playing. If I was foolish enough to announce my intentions, my brother would immediately retrieve the issue which reviewed it and point out I would be either prematurely aroused by seeing *Maria* do the cobra dance, or my hair permanently whitened by seeing *Igor* robbing graves. Little did any of them realize it was really *Sabu* I was going to see. There were more things in my closet than just my comic books.

To me the Trinity consisted of *Sabu*, *Maria Montez*, and *Jon Hall*. From them I learned you should not toss perfectly good taxpayers into a live volcano or try to win the deed to Temple Island in a card game with *Thomas Gomez*. These things Dad had failed to communicate to me, and the Bible seemed remarkably circumspect on what to do if you were trying to pry inlaid jewels from the bottom of a sacred pool when an earthquake hits. Especially if it's all in Technicolor. And unlike my father, who would sometimes camp out, hoping someone would build a church around him so he'd be first one in, I could actually see my gods most any Saturday afternoon at the Roseway Theater. All it took was eleven cents and the confiscation of my slingshot.

The rapture of this religious experience would often be accompanied by an *Abbott & Costello* film (for years I thought one of the *Andrews Sisters* was a horse), a cartoon, a newsreel of our bombing the hell out of some historic European city, and a serial chapter in which, true to form, women existed solely to be rescued. If I managed to survive the entire program without being kicked out, I would pick up my free copy of *Jingle Jangle* comics on the way out. The latter was not the unmitigated disaster you might think, as one could

sometimes trade it to a girl for a real comic book, or convince the druggist your mother had gotten it for you by mistake (hoping he would not see the obsolete date) and exchange it for another.

Anyway, my brother's indexed copies of *Parent's Magazine* would put the kibosh on virtually any non-Disney film I wanted to see. So I learned to say I was going to some other film. Mentioning a *Bing Crosby* movie was a sure way to get permission. *Parent's Magazine*, probably in the pay of the Vatican, always rated them highly, and I must have used *Going My Way* ten or fifteen times. I'm surprised my parents didn't fear I was going to enter the priesthood, but it never seemed to bother them. Just so it wasn't *Maria* and her cobra dance. It was like a football game, with my parents running interference. One ran around them or was plowed under.

My brother's influence waned when my parents' subscription to *Parent's Magazine* expired. He later climbed all sixteen major northwest mountain peaks and still managed to become an atheist. Succeeding years have not been kind to him, as he lives in Camas, Washington.

So I managed, one way or another, to see the movies I wanted to see and read the comic books I wanted to read and survived the maelstrom of World War II in the languid, provincial city of Portland, Oregon, whose innocent days now appear as far removed as old Pompeii.

Like most kids, I ate Wheaties, but still stank at sports, even prisonball. I sent off for the Charles Atlas course so I could get that muscular bully at Janzan Beach. But it turned out he also sent for it, and was stronger than ever. Even liberal applications of *Brylcream* caused no one to pursue me. But I still had comic books. They were a real solace.

It's too bad their Golden Age came at a time when kids had little money. It was the tail end of the Great Depression. In 1941 *Life* magazine had a photo of a 1940 high school graduating class. Only *half* the students had found jobs in the ensuing year, and this was at a time when war was raging in Europe, and America was fast rearming. It was tough to buy a comic book, and even tougher to collect them. It is a shame, but most collecting periods arrive when few have money to collect. The greatest cars America ever built appeared in



the 1930's, but few could buy them. Comic books, the first and greatest outpouring of true children's literature the world has ever seen, appeared at a time when not many could afford them. And there were no speculators then. One purchased a comic book because one liked it, not because one felt it might appreciate in value.

Being a teenager in the 1940's was no great honor. Most kids regarded it only as a painful process through which one became an adult. Other than comic books, radio serials, movie serials, and breakfast food premiums, there was no subculture for kids, at least in Portland. Perhaps there was in Beverly Hills, with the bobby-soxers and the money to have cars and trendy clothes in the Hollywood environment. But in Portland, Oregon, we walked through ten feet of rain just to get to school, and the clothes we wore were intended mostly to keep us warm. In fact, we felt fortunate to have them. We had no teenage idols. We may have admired our heroes' sidekicks: Batman had Robin, Tarzan had Boy, Dick Tracy had Junior, Red Ryder had Little Beaver, and for some unfathomable reason, Roy Rogers had "Gabby" Hayes. But for the most part it's adults we wanted to become. The real youth culture was still a decade away, with James Dean and Elvis Presley and Annette Funicello appearing in the 1950's.

Comic Books: My partner, Leonard Brown, and I started Collectors Book Store in Hollywood, California, in early 1965. The majority of our sales the first few years were comic books. Leonard, a year younger than myself, *really* loved old comic books. He knew them all, inside out: the super-hero comics, the newspaper reprint comics, the EC's, the funny animal, the off-trail titles, the give-aways. He knew the origins of all the heroes and the artists and the publishers, and when they started and when they disappeared. He remembers with nostalgia the newsstands ablaze with all their color.

For me the comic books were merely a *part* of my life, not an all-consuming thing. They were so available one assumed their existence as a right. I do recall the privations of World War II hit me only when the comic books reduced their size and page counts to a point they seemed a shadow of their former selves. I could stand the rationing of food and clothing, since everyone still seemed to have more than they'd ever had

anyway, but to see the comic books deteriorate was hard to take. They were done in by the paper shortages plus so many of their artists and their writers went off to war. The Golden Age was over, never to return.

True, comic books did not end, and in some respects they continued on to new and greater heights. It is just they changed. Millions had been sent overseas to entertain the troops and thus gained a new respectability with a more adult-like audience. Now they were being aimed at the returning GI's as well. The EC comic books of the 1950's were just around the corner, and Carl Barks had yet to reach his pinnacle with his marvelous tales of Uncle Scrooge McDuck and a host of new Walt Disney comic book creations. The mighty Marvel Comics with their Fantastic Four and Spider-Man remained still in the future as well as Walt Kelly and his splendid Pogo Possum stories. But the innocence was gone. Now the field was ripe for sociologists and psychologists and all the do-gooders to investigate. No longer were the comics just for kids.

Comic books really influenced kids during their Golden period. My mother would take me to the public library in Portland's Hollywood district to insure that proper reading material came my way. Afterwards we would visit Yaws Restaurant where the lines were three deep behind each stool. But the day I remember most was in 1941 when we afterwards entered a ten-cent store and I purchased a copy of *Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot*. What a comic book: Mickey is a detective and has a secret underground hideout in his back yard accessible only by a tunnel concealed beneath a rose bush.

I resolved immediately to duplicate his hideout in my own back yard. I dug for several days until my ever-solicitous mother explained to me that government restrictions on the use of steel and reinforced concrete would preclude my ever finishing it. After Pearl Harbor I resubmitted my idea as being useful for a bomb shelter, but it was a no-go as my father did not believe in bombs. So my brother used my excavation as a pillbox to shoot down enemy Japanese planes with his B-B gun until the winter rains came and silted it all over.

We did have books in our home. Most of them were given us by relatives in Ohio who were glad we

lived so far away. Mother used them mostly to press flowers in, and my brother to hide his growing collection of pornographic pictures. But I actually read some of them.

One was called *The Fairy Book*. There was a story in it called "The Juniper Tree." It featured a wicked stepmother who murders her little boy, then chops him into pieces and cooks him in vinegar. When the boy's father comes home he find the resulting meal "delicious" and eats it all, throwing the bones under the table. The boy's half sister collects them and lays them under a Juniper tree. Afterwards a "beautiful bird" (actually a stool pigeon) appears and proceeds to go around the neighborhood singing "My mother, she killed me; My father, he ate me." Even though the stepmother is later crushed by a millstone and the kid miraculously reappears, for me the story was a real downer. No comic book or Universal horror movie ever affected me as much. I made sure all the trees in the back yard were Douglas Firs, and remember the story to this day.

Comic books. One of the reasons I began collecting them in 1945 was that a friend of mine, Allen Keeney, had kept all his. His father was a druggist and had brought them home from work. I remember his father. He was always prone upon a davenport. I never saw him standing, but I imagine he was vertical part of the time. Allen had comic books going back to the *Mickey Mouse Magazine* of the late 1930's. I managed to get as many of them away from him as possible, and this was the nucleus of my collection. All my earlier ones had been given by my father to the children of Japanese-Americans in the resettlement camps. As a true Christian, my father not only gave *his* all—he gave *other* peoples' all as well.

It was difficult to find old comic books in Portland, even in late 1945. I remember finding a copy of the January 1939 *Mickey Mouse Magazine* in a Goodwill store near the Weatherly Building. Boy did I feel lucky. But in 1947 catastrophe struck. Bess Robinson, our art instructor at Gregory Heights, spotted it and took an unnatural dislike to it. She tore it in half, lengthwise, to the consternation of the entire class, who knew how much I treasured it (I should have collected old phone books; I'd like to have seen her try it with that.) But I fished it out of the wastebasket after class and laboriously taped it back



together again. I kept it for years until a mint one came my way.

The *Mickey Mouse Magazine* was very rare. It was published between 1935 and 1940 and appealed to a younger age group than did the comic books. But as a Disney collector I had to have them. I obtained a number of them from the Davis Bookstore on 3rd avenue in 1952, but in 1954 I was really lucky. I received a letter from Anton LeVay, head of the Satanic Church in San Francisco. He had all but one of the missing issues I required. He preferred fifty cents each to the soiled soul I offered him, and I willingly paid his price. Years later when I met him he proved to be a delightful person, reminding me much of Reverend Black, a Methodist minister we once had at Bennett Chapel in south east Portland. It wasn't until 1972 that I finally completed my set of the *Mickey Mouse Magazine*, and then it was through the cooperation of the Disney Studio itself.

Speaking of Reverend Black, one evening in 1949 when I was quietly sitting at home savoring my latest Carl Barks acquisition, he rang the doorbell. Upon admittance he claimed that while driving past our home God told him I needed saving. This was just like God, to stir things up. However, unknown to Rev. Black, who was new to our church, my parents tended to believe that Methodists are born saved, thus saving a lot of time and inconvenience. Plus they belonged to a faction in the church that already referred to the reverend as "the sneakin' deacon." So they gave him short shrift and I was truly saved. But my comic book was crumpled through my having hastily placed it under the davenport cushion, and the next day I had to buy another.

I liked Reverend Black. He created a great deal of dissension within the church, which is what Methodist ministers are for. And any man of the cloth my parents disliked I felt had possibilities. I remember once, to prove himself a buddy of the young, he told me a lot about girls, a lot more, in fact, than I wanted to know. He didn't realize I wasn't interested, but I went along with him and drooled at the proper intervals. I don't know to this day if what he told me was true. I never looked.

My early life always seemed to be a confrontation between the proud (comic books) and the profane (religion). There was an old Baptist

church at 72nd and Sandy in those days, right across from Fairley's Drug Store. In 1941, I was sentenced to attend Sunday school there, and on those Sundays when Fairley's was not closed (they alternated with the Davis Drug Store a mile or so away) there ensued a lopsided struggle between God and mammon for my dime. I say lopsided because mammon always won. But on those days when Fairley's was locked up tighter than a drum, the Baptists cheerfully received their due.

This was because the Baptists put on a really good show. Reverend Travis was in charge of this travesty, and he was always in exuberant despair over the fact that cannibals in far off lands were eating Baptist missionaries faster than the Fuller Theological Seminary could replace them. It appeared that no sooner did the wide-eyed, hapless, Bible-stomping zealots step off the boat than the savages rang the dinner bell.

The good reverend had a felt blackboard upon which he would apply with ever-increasing fury cutout overlays that told the story. In those pre-Velcro days they would fall off almost as quickly as he applied them, but at the end, when he was knee-deep in discarded patches and the marrow of the martyrs had been marinated, the moral was that God had triumphed. I always left with a good feeling, knowing that my humble tithe was going for the nutritional well-being of our colored brethren.

Bennett Chapel was different. How I suffered there. My folks joined it in 1948 when I was fourteen years old. It was a picturesque New England type of church with a steeple, and the congregation was right out of "Our Town"... the cemetery scene. Mother was organist there, but even the sprightliest tunes sounded mournful when played within its narrow confines. Naturally this church had to have a youth group, and naturally I had to join.

The youth group was based on the even then discredited Fuhrer Principal. This meant we were stuck with whoever managed a successful putsch. In early 1949 Sam Vahey accomplished this and was installed in pageantry not seen since the last Nuremberg rally.

Sam's parents were pillars of the church and had been so since the days of the patriarchs. I was therefore more than suspicious of anything emerging from their loins. Added to this was the discomfort of knowing that Sam

himself was handsome, talented, popular, intelligent, and outgoing; in fact he was everything except religious. Since he worked in my father's hardware store after school, I looked forward to a portion of the spoils, perhaps being appointed gauliter of something. But it was with trepidation that I anticipated his inaugural address. Would he sell out for the cardboard miter we had given him? What would be his program?

His first words were: "Let's choose up sides and smell arm pits." Our youth group was in good hands.

Reverend Irwin later became minister to this vale of tears on S.E. Ramona. His sermons would cause birds to drop out of the sky. In 1952 I found a way around this.

The Guild Theater in downtown Portland suddenly brought back for one week only the 1940 *The Thief of Bagdad* which starred Sabu. *The Thief of Bagdad* was my all-time favorite film, and in those pre-Video days, I didn't know if I'd ever be able to see it again. I *had* to go every night. And most of these were school nights. It was my senior year at Gresham Union High School and I was taking easy subjects so I'd be on the honor role and stay out of the Korean War. But no way would my parents let me out to see a movie on a school night. Sooner would people catch cold in Hell.

So I had to come up with an excuse. I told them that in order to help gain a college scholarship I needed to be in as many extracurricular high school activities as possible. One night I made it chorus, and I even had my mother bone me up on "The Skaters' Waltz," the only song the Gresham chorus knew. (Actually, "The Holy City" was also in their repertoire, but they had to give it up when their only castrato made the football team.) Another night I made it the Future Farmers of America, and I even took a sack of Vigoro to make it look authentic. Another night it was the swimming team, which involved a certain risk, since Gresham didn't even have a pool.

The last night I told them I was trying out for the part of Iago in *Macbeth*. They were sorry I didn't get it. They would have been even sorrier if they had found out Iago is in *Othello*.

But it was worth it. For by being able to see *The Thief of Bagdad* every day for a solid week I was able to memorize all the scenes and all the



dialogue and all the music. This came in good stead when Rev. Irwin would begin his sermons. For as soon as *he* began, I began rolling the title credits of *The Thief of Bagdad* in my head.

My eyes would glaze over as I envisioned the opening scene where the evil Jaffar's ship sweeps with billowing sails into the bustling harbor at Basra. Rev. Irwin may well have thought his words had induced in me a state of religious euphoria, but it was actually my being lost in this incomparable Technicolor fantasy. I always timed it so that just as he was announcing that the Tuesday Club would meet on Wednesday, Sabu was flying past the towering minarets of ancient Bagdad on his flying carpet and proclaiming to the world that he was off for "some fun and adventure at last."

Many years later I wrote to Miklos Rozsa, the actual composer of the magical score for *The Thief of Bagdad*, and told him how his wonderful music had helped keep me from becoming one of the walking dead at Bennett Chapel. He wrote me back that I had been "a naughty boy," but he sent me an autographed photo, which was what I really wanted.

Comic books. A number of my friends collected them as well. The idea seemed to be contagious. If one collected them, another one would start in too. Bruce Brown even collected *Little Lulu* comics. That took real guts in 1946. We all admired Little Lulu and her boyfriend Tubby, but to *publicly* admit it? Bruce's father was twelfth from the top at Janzen Knitting Mills. We schemed as youths to eliminate the other eleven so he would be on top. I feel to this day we would have been successful, if our parents had allowed us to stay out after dark.

Jim Bradley collected *Planet Comics*. I liked this title too, especially the "Mars, God of War" stories. It had a clean, representational style of drawing I have always liked. I purchased a mint copy of the 1940 first issue for him in 1951 as a birthday present. It cost me \$2.00 from Claude Held in upstate New York. Already stirrings of comic book collectibility were being felt, and Mr. Held was the very first dealer. And today, almost half a century later, he is still at it.

By this time I was heavily into collecting science fiction pulps. They were easy to obtain. All you needed was money. Donald Day, a Portland

postal worker, had a complete collection of them, and it blew my mind to see them as a youth. He later published the world's first index to them, a reference work still unparalleled in the field.

Science fiction readers often kept their magazines. Few mothers made them throw them out. In fact such fans were old enough to stand up to their mothers. But practically without exception, *no* collectors of science fiction magazines *ever* kept their comic books. And this in spite of the fact that many of the pulps were little more sophisticated than the comic books themselves. Some of the pulps, such as *Planet Stories*, *Wings*, and *Jungle Stories*, had direct counterparts in the comic books, often with the same heroes. But it was the pulps that were kept, not the comic books. There was a stigma attached to comic books. Perhaps their almost universal accessibility and identification with the young made them seem worthless in the eyes of collectors. Consequently, many pulps survived,

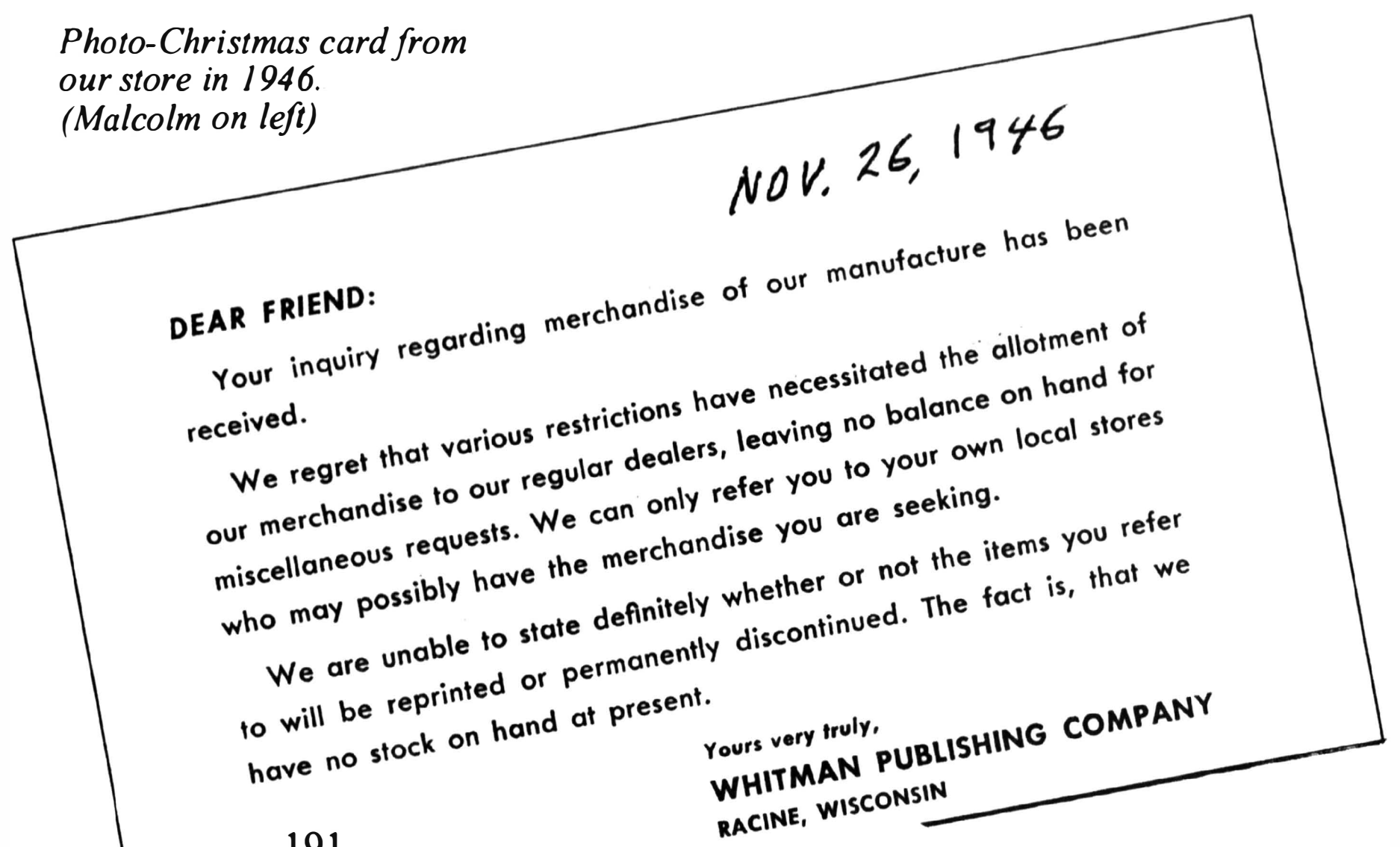
and their values are a tiny percentage of the values of old comic books.

Comic books were everywhere when I was young. Heaven was as close as the neighborhood drug store, candy store, or ten-cent store. You couldn't avoid comics then; almost every child had a sloppy stack or two beneath his bed. Nowadays you have to buy them in specialty stores. I'm not sure what goes on in these specialty stores, but somehow their proprietors don't seem as wholesome as the middle-aged women who manned the counters at Woolworth's and Newberry's for 25 cents an hour and could spot incipient sin a mile off.

And we didn't buy whole cartons of the stuff in 1947, as the present speculators do. We couldn't afford to, and besides, we didn't have the vision. And I'll let you in on a secret the speculators do not know. If five hundred copies of *anything* survive, it will probably wreck the market for all time. If you don't believe me, try selling five hundred copies of *Action Comics* #1 for \$50,000 each. *Nothing*



Photo-Christmas card from our store in 1946.  
(Malcolm on left)





will be rare if people think it someday will be and save it.

I haven't even *mentioned* Big Little Books as yet. That is what I most loved about the ten-cent stores in Portland. One downtown city block across from Meier & Franks had *three* such stores, all in a row. And each one seemed to vie for the best presentation of Big Little Books. They had rows and rows of them, all spine out. They were as colorful as jewels, and the cost was only 10 cents each. I remember buying *Mickey Mouse and the Seven Ghosts* and *Donald Duck Gets Fed Up* in 1940. I enjoyed them for years until the Japanese got hold of them.

Adults were more tolerant of Big Little Books since they had no suspect super heroes, and the stories were mostly reprinted from newspaper comic sections of the day. Adults *had* heard of the exploits of Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy, Flash Gordon, Smitty, the Gumps, and Li'l Abner, and even followed them themselves. I never had any trouble with my parents over BLB's. It was the comic books with their lower quality and need for suspension of belief which caused the trouble. Only truly unsophisticated kids could do this. That is what makes these comic books so fascinating today. But it caused adults to become increasingly suspicious. What was this junk their kids were reading? All this led to Dr. Wertham and his SS stoolies, but that was ten years in the future.

Speaking of The Gumps, the first Big Little Book title I can recall having was a Chester Gump one. My family had just moved to Portland from Ohio, and my dad had found a church to his liking on Mt. Tabor. Its pastor, Dr. Reed, also didn't believe in guns or war. He later got into a lot of trouble during World War II when he refused to allow his church to be used for the draft. This only shows you should never allow a Christian to head a church. But this was November of 1939, and fortunately Dr. Reed *did* believe in having carnivals.

They were holding a carnival one night and my family attended. Besides the obligatory table filled with lurid Sunday school pamphlets, there was a table full of used Big Little Books. I may not have ever seen any before, but they were five cents each, and I actually *had* a nickel. It was probably left over from my last attendance at Sunday school when my teacher failed to shake me down. So I carefully

looked over the titles and selected one which caught my eye. It was *Chester Gump in the City of Gold*, and I was enthralled by the idea of an entire city made of gold. But I was disappointed when I got it home. The artwork was so poor I felt I could draw a better city. Not yet six, I knew the drawings sucked. But it was my first Big Little Book. The first of many.

But this "many" did not include the near complete set of Big Little Books David Chamberlain offered me in 1951 for \$50.00. He was selling out, and while his set lacked thirty or so copies, it was truly something to behold. But I didn't have space for them, and more important, I didn't have the \$50.00. I was earning 30 cents an hour in my father's hardware store (the YMCA had jettisoned him in 1943 for maintaining the Japanese cemetery in Portland while the Japanese-Americans were in the camps) and I needed my money to purchase the bare necessities of life, like comic books by Carl Barks.

David had amassed his collection without too much trouble by haunting the Portland bookstores for several years. You could do this with Big Little Books. Their odd shape made them unsuitable for wartime paper drives, and I've already mentioned their respectability made them less prone for throwing out. A number of used bookstores paid attention to them, and while it was worth your life to find a comic book older than 1943 in 1946, a Big Little Book from 1934 was not at all uncommon.

Every Saturday in 1946 my friends and I would go downtown to hit the stores for items for our collections. Cameron's Book Store was the friendliest and the most fun. Mr. Cameron seemed a simple-minded fellow who would pay too much and charge too little, so no one could respect him as a businessman. But his was the most popular store in town, and the only one that welcomed us. He had tables full of comics and Big Little Books, but what we especially liked was his back room completely filled with the old boys books from our parents generation. There couldn't have been much demand for them, but apparently Mr. Cameron liked them.

The titles were *The Hardy Boys*, *The Rover Boys*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, *The Air Service Boys*, and *Tom Swift*, but we were unimpressed. None of them ever undressed in a phone booth to reveal his secret identity. And who cared if Tom Swift had an electric

flashlight? We had one too. But we had a use for these dusty books. We would bet one another a nickel that the first page of any book selected at random would contain the word "chum." Usually each book began with the hero lounging in his college rooms when his "chum" enters, or the hero is bemused in his laboratory when his "chum" stops by. Well, to us it was hilarious. You'd have to have been there, and besides, in Portland in 1946 there wasn't much else to be amused by except watching the bridges over the Willamette open and close for passing ships. That and allowing the doorman at the Broadway Theater to examine certain parts of our anatomy in return for free admission.

The Hiland Bookstore, two door's away from Camerons, had a basement table topped with comic books, but they hated all their customers, especially the younger ones. We would tiptoe down their broad, decrepit steps, but the creaking would invariably give us away. This would alert the two old harpies who ran this Stygian nether world, and they would flutter over in a cloud of feathers to watch like hawks as we went through their meager stock. They never had anything anyway. And the place was terrifying.

To conserve electricity most of the far off reaches of this cavern were swathed in darkness. Occasionally a dangling light bulb left over from Edison's first experiments would be turned on if some visiting Golem wanted to inspect the lower depths. For me I was glad the comic table was directly at the bottom of the stairs. And it was less gloomy over by the counter where enough light was provided the harpies could tell a real bill from a fake one.

And in this area, behind a curtain, they had stockpiled stacks of old science fiction pulps, which were of increasing interest to me. But having lost the Golden Fleece, these ladies had decided to guard these pulps with ever greater vigilance. In fact, if they had been chosen to guard the Ark of the Covenant, it would still be around today. I don't believe I ever did see any of those pulps, at least close-up. But I don't mean to speak ill of these ladies, as they are now undoubtedly sentinels in Hell and I'm bound to run into them again. But it was like leaving Purgatory to ascend the steps and reenter the brightness of day.

The old man's bookstore was better. It was really the Davis



Bookstore, but we called it the old man's bookstore because Davis was an old man. He also was sour on life, and had been since the Crimean War. Mr. Davis kept boxes of old Big Little Books under several tables, and they were a delight to go through. Mr. Davis also paid attention to the science fiction pulps, and in 1948 Jim Bradley and I purchased for \$150.00 (on time payments) a complete set of *Amazing Stories* from the first issue in 1926 through the last large-size issue in 1933. I still have the set, having had it bound in the early 1950's after buying out Jim's portion.

The Portland Bookstore was best of all. It paid attention to *all* these areas, and was the first in Portland to carry a full range of the new science fiction books that began appearing after the war. They had actually began setting comic books aside in 1942, boxing them up for future selling. That was quite visionary for the time. Around 1947 we heard about this and began pestering the owner to bring them in. I guess my mother arranged it, because about this time I had to have my wisdom teeth extracted, and Mother promised that if I lived through the ordeal, I could go through these comics at the Portland Book Store. So when we got there, with me still a bit groggy, there were five or six good-sized boxes awaiting us. I eagerly went through them, but was bitterly disappointed. Not a funny animal comic among them. All were titles like *Boy Commandos*, *Human Torch*, etc. Even at only 15 cents each, there were none that I could use.

The only other places where one could obtain old comic books in those days were the Salvation Army and Goodwill stores. There were ghosts in all the bookstores then, but none more so than here. We would shiver in these places even in the daylight. They were staffed by ethereal older women who looked like they were waiting for something that would never come. Occasionally a man would stare at us with eyes like Jesus on the cross. Everything here had lost all hope, and anything we purchased smelled of fumigation. It was there I resolved to allow no law to stand in the way of my becoming rich.

We also tried to buy old comic books directly from the publishers. In 1946 my friend Allen Keeney wrote the Whitman Publishing Company to buy old Big Little Books, to no avail. Allen was informed they didn't have any. This was untrue. They actually

had a warehouse full which was later looted, and it took me twenty years but I finally got what I wanted. In 1947 I wrote K. K. Publications in Poughkeepsie, New York, for back issues of *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories*. They also said they didn't have any, and they also lied. They had a ton of them, and they were also stolen years later when their value had become astronomical. In 1948 I made a last desperate attempt, this time writing directly to the Dell Publishing Company in New York City. Again, no dice! Which shows that even *during* the Golden Age of comic books, it was exceedingly rare that a publisher could or would bother to supply back issues. To their credit, *Famous Funnies* made available for

many years issues back to 1934, but it was apparently one of the few exceptions.

About the only real way to locate old comics in those days was to find someone who had kept them. I recall in the summer of 1946 Jim Bradley discovered that a nearby neighbor's spastic teenage son had several boxes of old comics in his attic crawl space. His mother would grudgingly sell any copies at 10 cents each that he no longer wanted. Jim and I would show up at their tiny residence and carefully select those precious issues, many extending back to 1940, that we needed.

The boy's mother would show her son the various issues and he would thrash around in bed, thereby



## K. K. PUBLICATIONS, Inc.

- WALT DISNEY'S COMICS
- RED RYDER COMICS

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y.

December 8, 1947

Malcolm Willits  
3923 N. E. 76th  
Portland, 13, Oreg.

Dear Sir:

This will acknowledge your letter to WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES magazine, regarding back copies.

We regret to advise that we do not stock back issues.

Thank you for your interest.

Very truly yours,

K. K. PUBLICATIONS, INC.

*Dorothy E. Reynolds*  
Circulation Department

dr/mk



signaling in some unknown fashion which issues he wanted to keep. Apparently big money meant nothing to him. Would he want to keep those sunny mid-1941 Disney comics I had found? I prayed to the Methodist God, the only one I knew at the time, that he would not—with the usual result. So when they weren't looking I placed those Disney issues in the stack he was willing to part with. Was I sorry later? Are you kidding? Great collections are rarely built by honest means alone.

Also of interest to us were the classic newspaper comic sections of the recent past. But this was before the days of microfilming, and the downtown Portland public library zealously guarded their bound volumes. They wouldn't bring them out for kids, so we were reduced to periodically checking the large reading stands on the second floor in the hopes a left-over volume would still be there. Occasionally an adult would take pity on us and put in a request for something we wanted to see. Then too, you could sometimes con your way into the newspaper morgues at the *Oregonian* and the *Journal* if you had a suitable excuse.

In 1948 a real opportunity occurred. An article appeared in the *Oregonian* regarding a Mrs. Dill, who for twenty five years had saved the Sunday comic sections and bound them together with string to make large comic volumes for her grandchildren. My friends and I quickly made a beeline to her house.

There they were, a large stack of nearly mint Sunday comic pages featuring Buck Rogers, Tarzan, Flash Gordon, and Dick Tracy, almost all from the 1930's. She wasn't too eager to sell, but we convinced her it would be better than having glue put in her Bechstein piano. So we agreed upon a price of ten cents each, and I bought all the Buck Rogers pages. They were really glorious in 1932, full-page, full-color, and full of funky rounded space ships as published in the old Portland *News-Telegram*. I kept them for six years until Ray Bradbury wrote me that he needed them, beginning an acquaintance with the celebrated science fiction author which has lasted to this day.

Sometimes there were problems even in obtaining *new* comic books. For years I haunted the local Firestone Store at Christmas time hoping to obtain a copy of their annual comic giveaway. It always featured a special

Donald Duck story by the "good artist," Carl Barks. But you had to time it right. Too early and they hadn't come in. Too late and they were gone. Plus you were first expected to buy something.

This presented problems. Firestone sold automotive products, and my folks were still driving the 1936 Chevrolet they had purchased in 1939 to make the long trek west. Anything that dropped off it remained off. I don't remember how I obtained these comic books. It might have been through my soulful eyes or my slight-of-hand. Or perhaps the doorman at the Broadway Theater had a cousin who worked there. Anyway, I got them. The give-away *March of Comics* were more difficult. I never knew for sure where they could be found. They contained some of the best Donald Duck stories Carl Barks ever did. But for these I had to rely upon coming across used copies at some later time.

Carol and JoAnn Rosendahl lived two doors down from our house on N.E. 76th. They were girls. I recall in 1946 Carol told me they each got a dollar a week in allowance. Such extravagance seemed beyond belief to me, especially since I was getting only a dime, and that dependent upon my schlepping sawdust and lawn clippings. At any rate, they used a portion of their fortune in 1945 to start a comic lending library in their basement. It was only a card table filled with comic books, but you could trade them two for one or rent outright for several pennies.

It was best to time your visit when they were having dinner and couldn't be around to pester you. But even then the comic books were the thinner, smaller ones from 1944 and on. Already the Golden Age was receding into the past.

Dolly Lind was in my 8th grade class at Gregory Heights. She was cute and popular and all the boys had designs on her, but I coveted only her Mickey Mouse Big Little Book. She had the very first one, published in 1932. I had nothing she wanted except fifty cents, which she willingly accepted. I went to her house and she threw it down to me from an upstairs window. Boys weren't allowed in girls' houses in those days. I told you Portland was provincial.

I still have the Big Little Book, having never found a better copy. But I realized I couldn't count on completing my collection by having

items thrown at me from upstairs windows. So in October of 1947 Jim Bradley and I started what may well have been the world's first comic collectors' fanzine.

We called it *The Comic Collector's News*, and while it featured articles, advertisements, and contests relating to comic books, its real purpose was to enhance our own collections by making our wants more widely known. We knew the comics were out there; it was just a matter of finding them. By our third issue we had established a club, The International Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Comics. Our editorial stated: "The I.S.P.C.C. asks for *your* help. Right now all over the United States there are millions of comic books, both old and new, that are soon to be destroyed. These comics are valuable. We must contact everyone possible so that we can save these comic books from destruction."

Our slogan was: "Your comics are valuable. Don't throw them away." Not bad, considering comic books had been in existence for only fourteen years and practically no one at that time recognized their importance. Fifteen more years would pass before comic collecting would be taken seriously, and another thirty before the field would so hit its stride that the great auction houses of the world would include among their masterpieces the very things we loved so much as kids. Who would have believed that *Action Comics* #1 would be worth more than *any* modern first edition by Hemingway, Faulkner, or Fitzgerald, all literary giants of our century? Certainly not our parents or our teachers.

Prices were low in 1947. One collector advertised he would pay 5 cents to \$1.50 each for old *Planet Comics*. Another offered up to \$1.00 each for 1942-6 *Spirit* comics. I myself offered to sell *Superman* and *Batman* number one. No price was listed, but five or six dollars probably could have obtained them both. I offered to pay 50 cents to \$1.50 each for 1935 and up *Mickey Mouse Magazines*, *Walt Disney's Comics*, and Big Little Books. Perhaps even then the field was beginning to stir. The Portland Bookstore placed an ad with us that mentioned they had "rare comics and Big Little Books."

As with most visionaries, we were somewhat prone to exaggeration. Our fourth issue claimed the I.S.P.C.C. to be "the biggest kids organization" in



the entire city. Actually, the Cub Scout Den of which I was an unwilling member, had more kids in it than the I.S.P.C.C. But I doubt if a 1947 Cub Scout manual with its outdated instructions on how to start a fire is worth as much today as a 1947 March of Comics giveaway with a story by Carl Barks.

The Cub Scouts! Why do parents think such wimpy organizations can make men of their sons? Once our den was taken deep into the woods and dared to get out on its own. We were expected to go west, but the compass they gave us only pointed north, so naturally we got lost. We weren't dumb. We'd heard the sun set in the west, but Portland was overcast that year and there weren't even any shadows.

Eventually we came upon a cliff much like that in *King Kong* on top of which stood a number of troglodytes from the Hill Military Academy. Our earnest inquiries regarding the direction of civilization were met with a hail of rocks, which caused us to respond loudly on their proclivity for incestuous maternal relationships as we made our escape. Once out of range we continued to communicate our displeasure through sign language.

We now found ourselves at the portals of a magic grotto and a pool full of money that we enthusiastically helped ourselves to until some black-clad clerics who had staked out a prior claim to this paradise chased us away. We crossed a gravel pit and emerged on 82nd Avenue near a small country store where we filled up on repeated rounds of Nehi soda pop and celebrated our good fortune.

Camp Collins, the YMCA summer camp at Spirit Lake in 1945, wasn't much better. It lacked only an *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign and a Dr. Mengele to divide the arrivals to agree with its European counterparts. But we discovered where the capos cooled their beer, and with a carton of Lucky Strike Greens someone smuggled in we found a sylvan spot where the water sparkled through a pagan greenery of trees and we could talk dirty until the hour grew late and the white-robed goddess across the lake hid herself in shame.

I had my first cigarette there, and the moon understood. It was almost thirty years before God got

around to blasting the place, and I could not take you to that spot today.

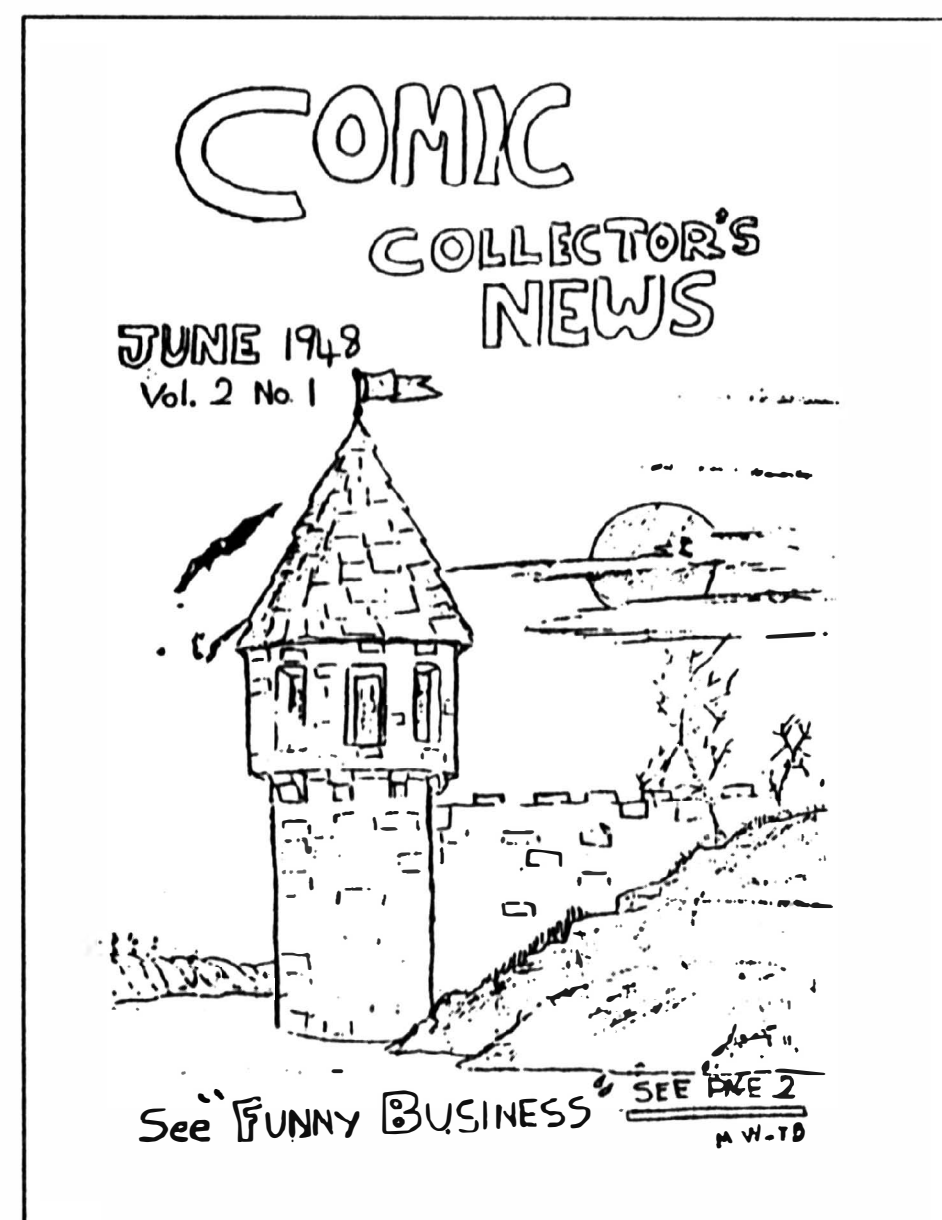
A scholarly article in our four-page June 1948 *Comic Collector's News* offered a complete history of the newspaper comic strip from the appearance of The Yellow Kid in 1895 to the first issue of *Famous Funnies* in 1934. Another article pointed out that "Many people have tried to have comic books banded" (sic) and that already thirty-six comic books were not allowed to be sold in Detroit. The article concluded that while current comic books were "still good, they will probably never be as good as the ones that came out 1934 to 1942."

This was years before the term "Golden Age" was applied to this early period, illustrating that even in 1948 fans were looking back to this great period in comic book publishing and lamenting its demise.

Our June issue even had a contest, the prize being a dollar bill (a fair sum of money in those days). Contestants were required to identify which comic books three characters appeared in, namely Strut Warren (*Fight Comics*), Peter the Farm Detective (*Mickey Mouse Magazine*), and Inferior Man (*Military Comics*). We even had a winner, John Baily of Oregon City. Encouraged by this, we had another contest in our August 1948 issue with a *two dollar prize*—this going to the contestant who could correctly identify the artists of The Spirit, Fantomah, and Espionage. But we soon realized it would be cheaper to fold the magazine than risk having to shell out the prize money.

*The Comic Collector's News* did little to enhance anyone's collection, since we all knew each other anyway. We all haunted the local bookstores, but almost nothing older than 1944 ever surfaced. Only when values increased to the point it became news did the old comic books start coming out of the woodwork, and that was many years after our young collecting days.

Comic books. I always had to have the most perfect copy of a new one. The drug store at 122nd and Powell, which I used in later years, would get in a good supply, and I would carefully examine each one for the slightest imperfection. One time some kids were watching me





from the soda fountain. Rather than admit that I still collected comic books at the age of 16, I told them I had been reading one while downing a milkshake and had used a five-dollar bill as a bookmark. Now I couldn't find it.

As I left to purchase the mint copy I had found, the sounds of mayhem from the comic section assured me no other collector would be able to purchase a mint condition copy of anything at *this* location.

It should be noted here there is a difference between *collecting* comic books and *accumulating* them. The accumulator merely keeps what he happens to buy or is given. The collector actively seeks out missing issues, purchases current issues, and upgrades condition whenever possible. The collector also *protects* his collection, while the accumulator often carelessly places it in his closet or cellar, where the greatest destructive scourge of modern civilization—The Mother—can get its hands on it.

It has been estimated by experts that the collective destruction of comic books by rampaging mothers has equaled the burning of *thirty* libraries of Alexandria. I know,

because I was one of the experts.

Why mothers do this I do not know. Perhaps scientists will someday find a gene for it.

I notice these *same* mothers will save stacks of old *National Geographic* magazines for their grandchildren to make use of. Perhaps they feel the only way of guaranteeing *having* grandchildren is through throwing out the comic books so their kids will grow up and produce some. At any rate, out the comic books went. The *Geographics* stayed, with a resulting zero value. The grandchildren didn't want them, and their collective weight has slowed the earth's rotation several seconds since the magazine's inception. This is why the skyrocketing value of old comic books has been in the news so much. *Everybody* used to have them, and everybody's mother threw them out. And the present comic books the speculators buy? This time they'll be saved, to end up in the attic along with the *National Geographical* and have the same resulting value.

Well, not quite everyone threw them away. In 1947 Jim and I found a young man in Portland who had actually kept his comic books

throughout the years. Kept and cherished them. His name was Vic Flach, and he lived in a nicer section of town. He was four or five years older than Jim and our bunch, and a fine artist to boot. He shared my love for *Fantasia* and tended to draw in the same style. Vic and his younger brother had stacks of old comic books, most of them accessible in drawers that pulled out from under their bunk beds. They didn't really collect them; they just *kept* them. All types. He even had a coverless copy of the first issue of *Walt Disney's Comics*, which to me in 1947 was a greater find than the Dead Sea Scrolls. And the amazing fact is that he *still* has all those comic books today.

Vic and his wife recently visited me at my movie memorabilia store in Hollywood. It must be forty years since I last saw him. Now he's retired from a lifetime of teaching art.

It was fun talking about the old days, and I was gratified to learn he still has all those comic books from over half a century ago. He was lucky. He had an understanding mother. Even when he went off to fight in the Korean War, she never touched his comic books.

GEORGE T. DELACORTE, Jr.  
President

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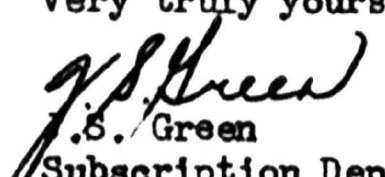
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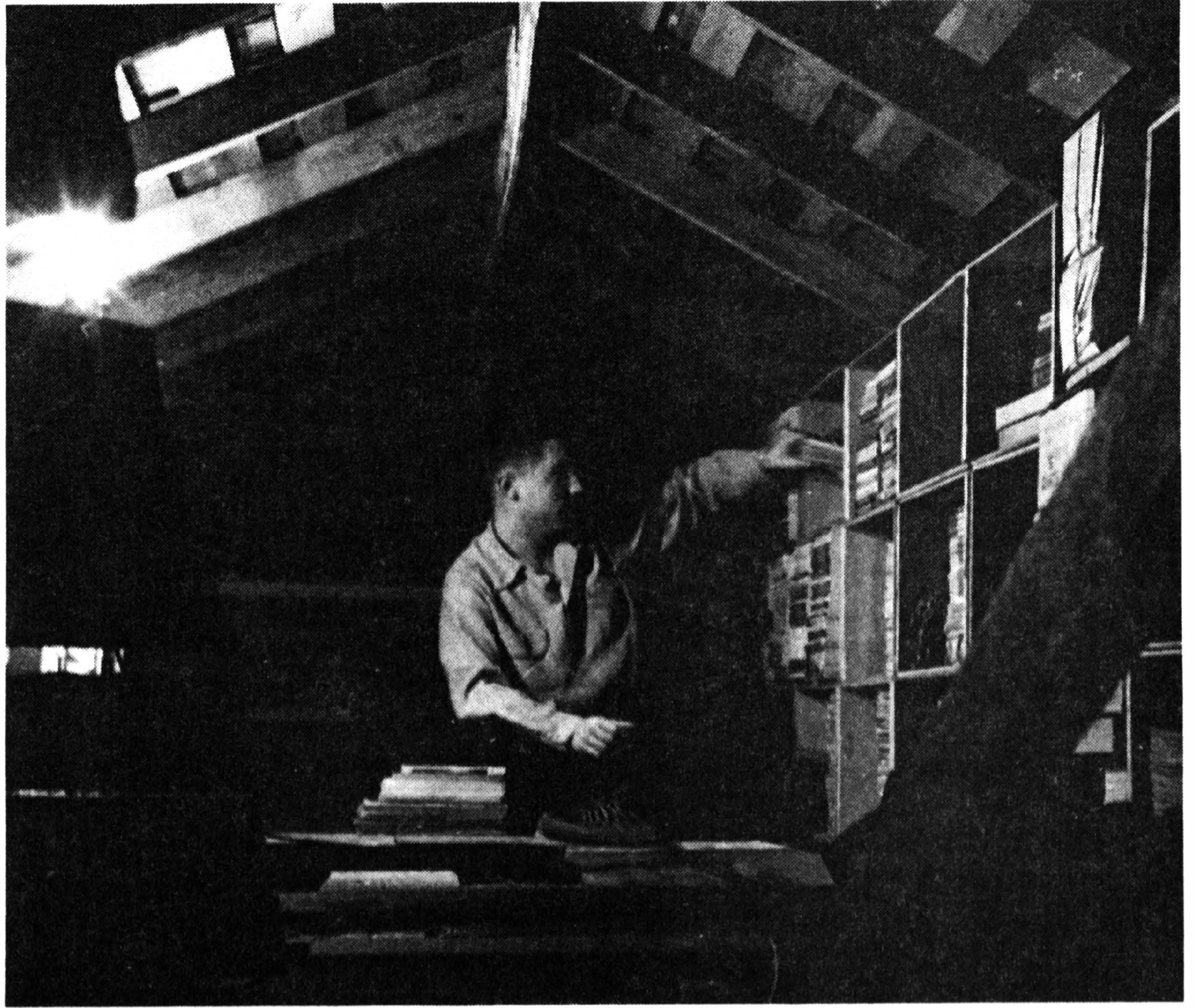
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Left: The home at 118<sup>th</sup> & Powell where Malcolm and his family moved in early 1948. Several years later, its attic crawl space contained Antane R. King comic books which today are valued in the millions of dollars. The house, with three bedrooms and three acres, cost \$12,500. Right: The attic crawl space at 118<sup>th</sup> and Powell. Malcolm hid his comic book and science fiction here from his rampaging brother, who in truth only destroyed one of Malcolm's comic books: a nice May 1942 issue of Walt Disney's Comics & Stories, done "to teach Malcolm a lesson." The Antane R. King comic books were later stored in stacks to the left.

My comic books were imperiled if I crossed the street. If my brother wasn't threatening them in reprisal for something he thought I'd done to him but didn't do but would like to have done, my father was beginning to get misty-eyed over the children orphaned by the Greek civil war. I couldn't allow the always-volatile world situation or my Tennessee Williams home life to endanger my growing collection, so in 1948, when we moved to 118th and Powell, I carefully hid most of them in our attic crawl space.

And there they slumbered for fourteen years while I attended Pacific University and the University of Washington, spent two years in the Army, and taught high school in the state of Washington. What had I in the attic at the time? Well, in 1948 not much. Several boxes of my favorites, that was all. But in 1953, at the age of nineteen, I made one of the greatest comic book finds of all time.

Large virgin comic book collections from the Golden Age are almost impossible to find, mainly because they never existed in the first

place. Who could have wanted to, or could have afforded to buy all the comic books that appeared during the late Depression and early years of World War II? Certainly no kid had that kind of money, or the space to keep them in. For complete mint runs of these comics to have survived, it required *adults* to buy and keep them—keep them through the wartime draft and paper drives, through household moves and periods of unemployment—to protect them from the ravages of silverfish and sunlight, extremes of temperature and the destructiveness of children and grandchildren.

For any comic book to survive over ten years during the Golden Age was little short of a miracle, as comic books were meant to be read and thrown away. Sure, some publishers, artists, and writers kept file copies, and even collectors kept runs of a particular title or two, but for accumulations representing the *entire field* to survive the travails and upheavals most people experience, well, it just didn't happen. Except it did. In two instances that I know of.

One was the great Mile High

Comic Book Store find in Denver, Colorado. A man there had purchased a great number of new comic books, kept them in pristine condition, and died still owning them. I understand they sold for something like a dollar a carton some thirty years ago. So great was this find it is too bad the government didn't purchase it as a part of our nation's heritage. But now it's been dispersed.

The other find was the one I made. Originally it was better than the Mile High find, because it contained *every* comic book and pulp magazine at least from 1930 up. This means that two people were actively collecting comic books during the 1930s and 1940s. It seems almost impossible that *two* people would have the time, money, and space to accomplish this. Mile High got the virgin one, although it lacked the funny animal and reprint titles. Mine was more like King Tut's tomb. Someone else had gotten there first.

In early 1953 I received a letter from an Antane R. King in Providence, Rhode Island, in response to an ad I'd run. He wrote in a sort of broken English, as if it was a second



language. He had comic books for sale, thousands of them, all mint, untouched. I purchased them all over a space of several months, first at ten cents each, plus shipping. I asked him repeatedly how he had obtained them, but he would never say. I was attending Pacific University at the time, and I would borrow a bicycle to ride down to the Railway Express office and pick up the packages. A lot of the comics I didn't even want, but at the later price of five cents each, I just couldn't turn them down. I later sold most of them for ten cents each, and felt I'd done real well. Their value today is astronomical.

Naturally I purchased the Disney comics first. He had *Walt Disney's Comics* from Feb. 1942 on up. He had *Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot*, and all the subsequent Mickey comics from 1943 to date. He had the Donald Ducks from *Pirate Gold* on up. He had the *Mads* in comic book form to #11, and all the Blondie color comics from 1940 on. For these I gladly paid the 10 cents each and had them bound into volumes most of which I still have today. I've had Carl Barks himself sign all the books that contain his work. There were many other comics I would like to have purchased from Mr. King, titles like: *Planet*, *Captain Marvel*, *Looney Tunes*, *New Funnies*, the *Four Colors*, even *Superman* and *Batman*. But he didn't have them. He'd sold them sometime before.

Mr. King never really told me he'd once had everything. I could tell, though, from what he *still had* that he'd once had everything.

I still have the list of the second group of comic books I purchased from him. For instance, I purchased *Adventure Comics* from number one in 1935 (then called *New Comics* and had a paper cover) to number 123. They cost me \$6.15. If he had these, he surely once had runs of *Famous*

*Funnies* and *King Comics*. I purchased *Super Comics* from #1, June 1938, to #79, Dec. 1944. There were 79 issues in all, and I paid a total of \$3.95. In 1962 I sold them to Clinton White in Seattle for a dollar each. He still has them.

*Crackajack Funnies* cost me \$2.15 from No. 1 through #43. *Star Comics* 1937-1939, 19 issues, were 80 cents. I purchased *Jungle* and *Jumbo Comics* practically from #1 and continuing on for 70 issues in each run. I took the *Wings Comics* #17 to 88, *Marvel Mystery*, his 25 oldest issues (paying the outrageous price of \$1.25 total), the 30 oldest *Captain America* comics for \$1.50, *Heroic Comics* from #2 to 45 (1940-1947).

*Fight Comics* from #7 to #53 were \$2.35. *Top-Notch* #5 to #47 cost \$2.15. I ordered the 50 oldest issues of *Thrilling Comics*, the 20 oldest of *Startling Comics*, and the 25 oldest *Exciting Comics*. On *Sub-Mariner* the five oldest issues at 25 cents, and *Human Torch* the 10 oldest issues. My records also indicate I ordered 97 early 1930s detective pulp magazines. This second list alone records that I purchased 3,205 mint comic books for a total price of \$160.25.

You can see that his collection had been hit, indeed well-hit, before I got there. Mr. King admitted this. But I'm sure that once he'd had them all. So it was more than comparable to the fabulous Mile High find, which means *two* such accumulations existed and survived beyond the Golden Age itself.

In 1962 Leonard Brown in Long Beach heard about my find and was determined to track me down. By the time he'd located me I'd sold most of them off, but the acquaintance we struck lead to our opening Collectors Book Store in early 1965. Leonard also took it upon himself to track down Mr. King, and he did manage to locate his widow, who had moved to

Florida. Leonard asked her if she had any more comic books for sale. She said no. Leonard asked her how Mr. King had obtained them. She did not answer.

So I put one of the greatest comic book finds of all time in my attic crawl space on S.E. Powell, and there it stayed until I was able to double my money. Dick Wald of S.W. Portland and several other collectors saw it, but no one seemed to recognize its value. I eventually sold them all for 10 cents each, including *Adventure Comics* #40, which introduced "The Sandman," a copy of which sold at auction in Maryland a few years ago for \$40,000. My *Marvel Comics* went for \$2.50. Today they are worth almost half a million dollars.

I had let a fortune slip through my hands, the kind of fortune few people get a chance at, even in a lifetime. God could have warned me. He knew where I was. Every Sunday I was in the furthest pew possible making up new words to the songs. ("On a hill, far away, stood an old Chevrolet...") We could have struck a deal. He'd have got his cut.

Now my chance for a sybaritic, hedonistic, Republican existence was gone. I had received my comeuppance through an unprincipled and unrepentant youth.

I should have paid attention to Reverends Travis, Black, and Irwin, and not laughed at their threadbare suits. I should not have placed Crackerjack prizes in the church collection plates, or gone into convulsions when the Parsonage Committee urged parishioners to do something on the carpet. God and the Methodist Church had exacted their revenge. They had gotten me, quite good.

But it sure was fun at the time.

— Malcolm Willits

## CALVIN AND HOBBS By Bill Watterson





# THEY CAME FROM CLAM GULCH!

## MEMORIES OF A MARVEL COMICS LETTERHACK

by Nils Osmar

I don't recall when I began writing to Stan, Roy, Jack, Steve, Don, Marie, Jim, John, Artie, Wally and the other creative souls at Marvel Comics, but I do remember when my first letter was published. (Before that, there were the little blue cards that arrived intermittently in the mail, which read, "Many thanks for your thoughtful comments. We gratefully appreciate your interest and hope we shall continue to deserve it. Sincerely, Stan and the Gang.") I must have fired off a number of letters, and collected quite a few blue cards, before the climactic moment ... but I do remember (vividly) the first time I opened my P.O. Box to discover a postcard that read, "Congratulations! Your letter, or portions thereof, will be printed in *Avengers* #43."

I showed the card to my Mom, who was dubious. Your letter, or portions thereof...? "It sounds like they could *cancel* it if they wanted to!" she said scoldingly—as if I should have known better than to write to a company that might do such a thing. She was vaguely disapproving; but then again, she was disapproving of *most* things associated with comic books, having lived through the anti-comics hysteria of the 1950s. (However, she did get a kick out of seeing the letter when it was printed.)

As it turned out, Mom's fears about censorship were moot in this case. My letter was three sentences long. If they'd cut anything, there wouldn't have been a letter left. Here it is, including Stan's response:

Dear Stan, Roy, and John,

Wow! I thought I was going to give up reading the *Avengers* for good because of Roy's (formerly, I might add) exaggerated style of writing. Then you had to hit me with issue #39. If Roy Thomas can write this well, the word is—go, go, go!! (So go already!)

Nils Osmar, Box 276  
Soldotna, Alaska 99669

The Rascally One *did* go, Nils—straight to our characteristically chaotic file-cabinet, to look up ish #39 and find out just what he started doing right! But, as usual, all our extra copies of that mag were gone. Frankly, we suspect that our cleaning-lady is either a sneak-reader or else an agent for Brand Echh! So, we'll just say welcome back aboard, chum, and we hope you enjoy the ride!

Marvel printed it in its entirety, without censoring a syllable. I don't know if they were impressed by my writing style at the age of thirteen, or amused to be receiving letters from the wilds of Alaska, or both.

In any case, they printed it ... and opened a floodgate of letters from the little town of Clam Gulch (where I lived, though the letters accompanying this article were posted from Soldotna) ... and eventually Seattle, where I finished my high school years. The more they published, the more I wrote. I fired off letters to all, or almost all, of the comic books published by Marvel in the next few years, including *Spider-Man*, *Thor*, *Fantastic Four*, *Avengers*, *Iron Man*, *Incredible Hulk*, *Agent of Shield*, *Sgt. Fury*, and virtually every Marvel title with the exception of *Millie the Model*.

Each went out in its own separate envelope, even when I was sending out ten in the same day. (No exaggeration! Does this sound compulsive, or *what*?) During my heyday as a letterhack, it sometimes seemed like not a month went by without a letter of mine appearing in some Marvel title or other.

Some of the letters were heartfelt, if somewhat overblown responses to the stories, characters or creative energies in the comic books. Others were written solely

Dear Stan, Archie and George,

It is with great reluctance that I write this, because it is going to *degrade* Marvel. About three years ago, around the time I first joined Marvel, your group was the obvious leader in the field. But since that time, while your competitors have been steadily improving, you have been slowly but surely going down the drain. Since that time of glory, Marvel has substituted the human interest and realism which set you on top, for one cheap two-syllable word: action. Sorry to say, as long as this imbalance remains, the Marvel group is doomed. But, I am not one to criticize without offering advice. So here it is: 1. Put more human interest and less action in your stories. 2. Give your readers more of Stan Lee and less of you lesser writers. 3. Concentrate more on the fullness and fineness of your artwork and inking. 4. Do not let any part of Marvel become a fad. This would completely *destroy* Marvel's chances. 5. Keep an adult approach to your plots. Follow these and other fans' suggestions, and Marvel may again regain her mantle of greatness.

Nils Osmar, Box 276  
Soldotna, Alaska 99669

Awww, gee whiz, Nils ... We know that you mean well or you wouldn't go to the trouble of writing us, but, *honest* ... We're trying just as hard now as we did three year ago, if not *harder*. And our sales and the letters from most of our fans seem to back us up on it. Your set of suggestions are good; in fact, it's pretty much what we thought we were doing. We try to maintain a balance of human interest and action without sacrificing either, though from time to time, there's bound to be plots where one element is stronger than the other. As for giving readers more of Stan ... Have mercy, mellow one! Unlike some of his cavorting characters, Smiley is not immortal; the only way to increase his already outrageous output is to find some way for him to work without ever sleeping or eating. He doesn't get very much of either done as is!

Iron Man #6 (1968)

because I had the letter-writing bug. I wrote 'em, they printed 'em. Some of the letters were humorous, some complaining, some gushing with warranted or unwarranted praise.... but whether or not I had anything to say about a given issue, it never stopped me from writing. (One letter, which they printed, commented on the fact that a comic I had bought that month had only one staple in the spine, not two!)

I started writing when I was thirteen and continued till I was almost twenty. Of course my life changed in a lot of ways, during this time. There was a stretch when I was a lonely kid, with few friends. I felt, when I wrote letters to the Marvel bullpen during this time, that I was



communicating with dear confidants. I didn't think much about the fact that the letters were being printed and read by thousands of other people. Seeing a letter in print was a kind of proof, during a time when I felt rather isolated and lonely, that I was real, that I existed.

One of the nicer things I received from Marvel during this time, nicer even than the recognition that came from having my letters published, was a card that read, "Nils, What can we say? You're our number one letter writer! Love, the Bullpen Gang." I didn't know who wrote it, but it meant a lot to me, coming at a time when I was feeling a bit lonely and disconnected from people in general. (I had just moved to Seattle, and was having a hard time adjusting to the move.) I felt like the bullpen was composed of friends who not only wrote and drew some amazing comics, but read my letters, silly though they might be, enjoyed them, and responded to them respectfully. (Perhaps the people reading them appreciated that someone was taking the time to respond to their stories, silly as many of the letters—and stories—were.) Years later, when I met Stan Lee at a talk he was giving at a college in Washington, and told him my name, he shook my hand warmly and said, "So you're the one!" It meant a lot to me at the time.

As my life changed, and I climbed out of my emotional hole, finished high school and got to know more people in Seattle, the comics I was reading changed too, recreating themselves in an attempt to become more relevant and address the social issues of the day. I kept writing, but the themes of my letters changed. They became more political, more about the real world and less about the art and stories. Some of the ones I wrote, and saw published in the late 1960s and early 1970s made no reference at all to the comics where they saw print. (A long letter in *Captain America* #139 was devoted to rebutting a rebuttal of a very political letter of mine they had printed a few issues before, criticizing the United States actions in Vietnam.)

By this time, I had become aware of the lettercols as a forum for ideas, and for making connection with people beyond the bullpen. I was marching and organizing against the Vietnam war, and my letters began focusing more on the war and the social changes going on in the country. Why Marvel went on printing them I don't know, except that I think that whoever was handling the letter columns in the bullpen had by then developed a sense of connection with me. I was like Guy H. Lillian III and Irene Vartanoff over at DC; there was a good chance of anything I wrote being published.

My teen years ended, and my life changed... and so did the comics. Stan Lee was no longer writing them (only editing and then publishing them, whatever that meant). Flo Steinberg was no longer associated the bullpen. Steve Ditko had left for Charlton, then DC, then faded, sadly, into obscurity. Jack Kirby had publicly criticized Marvel and moved over to the competition. Don Heck was being dissed, unfairly, I believed, in the fan rags. Roy Thomas was still around, but was editing and writing comics I didn't much care about, or feel a connection with. New writers and artists were producing what seemed to me to be only moderately successful imitations of the comics that had inspired my interest years before. There was no longer a sense that the comics were being created by people I knew. My letters appeared less frequently in Marvel comics, more frequently in newspapers and magazines. It was time to move on.

Dear Stan,

Racism is not an emotion, as fear, hatred, etc. Racism is a sickness, a condition of the de-humanized soul. It is not a natural emotion for white to hate Black, for non-Jew to hate Jew; it is bred-in. It is a sickness, and can be ended in the person. Those I know and love are proof of that.

Steven Shaffer's reply to my letter in *Captain America* #130 was biting, sarcastic. In reply:

I ask Steven to verify his statement that "If the Communists take over South Vietnam, three million civilians shall be executed". His letter shows an ignorance of the history of Vietnam, an ignorance of the reasons the war is being fought, and an ignorance of the fact that a soldier both in North Vietnam is no less human than the American he fights. Americans arrogantly assume they are sensitive, humane while "The enemy" is not. Be there a blood-bath, could it be any worse than the hideous state of war, of bombings, of constant death and a life of fearful subservience to their government now led by South Vietnamese "civilians" (who is truly civilian in a land torn by war?).

Stephen makes a false statement about the Black Panthers (actually not a direct statement, but a juxtaposition of words, to imply the Panther's "Would ban your magazine for daring to show a white man as a superhero figure").

I would suggest Steve, and all readers who care, make a study of Viet-Nam's history, listen to what both sides have to say. South Viet-Nam is a dictatorship masquerading as a democracy. (Does Russia's "elections" make it less a totalitarian state?)

In the American Revolution, a person supporting British Loyalists against the American Revolutionaries would be classified as supporting the British. Were Captain America to fight against the Communists in Viet-Nam he would be fighting "in support of South Vietnam's Government". Stephen calls this my "Brilliant strand of logicism". With sarcasm to lend his words emotional appeal, he carefully avoided having to support his arguments or in any way disqualify mine.

Attacking the Black Panthers revealed a lack of understanding of their position. When people are oppressed, they will fight back. When human beings are bound and gagged in a "Court of Law" for trying to defend themselves, something is wrong.

Something is. Any country can turn Fascist. The U.S. is no exception. In a war, soldiers on one side are no more free from dehumanization than soldiers on the other side.

It is a natural, human thing to desire a life free from war. Can you imagine living your life in constant fear of brutal death at any instant, never knowing when tomorrow a soldier may set your village on fire and murder your children under the premise of "Following orders"? Can you imagine? The Vietnamese don't have to. They live in a bloodbath now!

I reserve the right Stephen, to end my letters in any way I please. Such is freedom of speech. If I sound like Eleanor Roosevelt it is within my human rights.

I've been told to "Love it or leave it." Must a parent who truly loves his child either love it as is, or, if it is troubled, desert it without trying to help it?

The idea of government by the people is not a Communist conspiracy. It is inherent in the concepts of this country, of the freedom of the human soul.

Love it, but, my God, don't hide behind it!

Nils Osmar, 1504 N. 85th St.  
Seattle, Wash. 98103

Your letter speaks for itself, Nils. Rather than be pretentious, we'll just say—thanks.

Looking back, what can I say but ... it was fun. While many of my letters were silly, and some downright embarrassing to look back on (like the ones reprinted here), it was fun to be, briefly, Marvel's "number one letter writer". Like Andy Warhol said, we all get our fifteen minutes of fame. It was nice at the time to see my letters published. It meant a lot to me to have a connection with whoever may have been opening and reading all those letters in the early Marvel bullpen.

-end-



*The Comic Fandom Archive presents*



# Fanzines

## By

## Year



# 1947 - 1975

In my travels and contacts through-out comic fandom, I have often encountered folks who've either urged me to publish a "complete fanzine index" ... or, were planning to publish their own. Any number of fans have *begun* the task; none that I know of have finished. It's probably because anything like a *complete* index of amateur publications about comics would have to include many hundreds, nay *thousands*, of obscure titles that were published in print runs of under 100 copies. (Think about all the individual mini-zines produced for comics amateur press alliances!)

Let me add myself to the list of those who has compiled a list of most of the major fanzines, and many of the minor ones, that in no way could be considered exhaustive or complete. For me, it's simply a matter that I am not an indexer, or data-wrangler, at heart. Creating an ultimate fanzine index just isn't an idea that gets me excited. But, that doesn't mean that I wouldn't want to encourage *someone* to climb that mountain.

Toward that end, I present the list I've created to catalog the collection in my grandly-titled Comic Fandom Archive. With a few exceptions, these are mags in my possession—sometimes (as in the case of nearly all of the EC fanzines of the 1950s) in photocopied form. I offer this list for your reference. Generally speaking, I think *most* of the worthwhile comics fanzines are represented, though I might not have every issue. I hope you will find this list useful.

Furthermore, I make no exclusive claim on this data. Anyone who wants can feel free to use it in any way he or she sees fit. I'll even copy it onto disk, if you send a floppy and a self-addressed stamped mailer to Hamster Press. I can't make copies of the fanzines themselves for you, but the data is yours for the asking.



# concept 5

25¢



*Al Williamson cover  
to Larry Ivie's innovative  
fanzine of the late 1950s.*



## 1947

COLLECTOR'S NEWS (DECEMBER)  
VOL. 1 NO. 3  
COLLECTORS NEWS (OCTOBER) NO.  
1 VOL. 1  
COLLECTOR'S NEWS SPECIAL

## 1948

COMIC COLLECTOR'S NEWS (AUG)  
VOL. 2 NO. 4  
COMIC COLLECTOR'S NEWS (JULY)  
VOL. 2 NO. 2  
COMIC COLLECTOR'S NEWS (JUNE)  
VOL. 2 NO. 1

## 1951

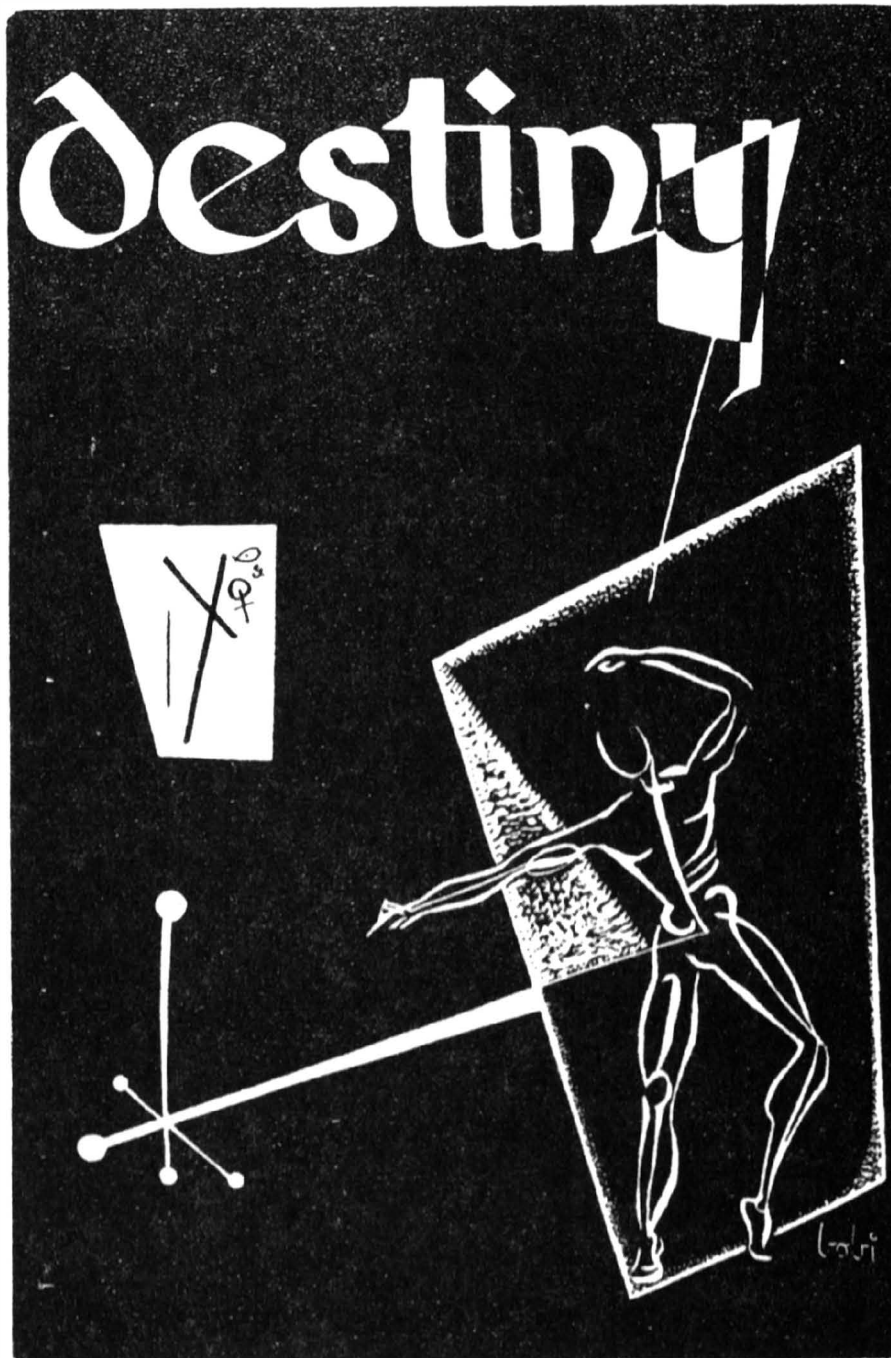
DESTINY #4/5 (SUMMER/FALL) .25  
JOURNAL OF SF 1951 MAGAZINE  
INDEX .25

## 1952

FANTASY-COMICS (SEPT.-OCT.) VOL.  
1 NO. 1 .5  
FANTASY-COMICS (NOVEMBER)  
VOL. 1 NO. 2  
FANTASY-COMICS (DECEMBER)  
VOL. 1 NO. 3

## 1953

DESTINY #8 (SPRING) .25  
DESTINY #9 (WINTER) .25  
EC FAN BULLETIN #1 (SUMMER)  
FANTASY-COMICS (JANUARY) VOL.  
2 NO. 1  
FANTASY-COMICS (FEBRUARY) VOL.  
2 NO. 2  
FANTASY-COMICS (MARCH) VOL. 2  
NO. 3  
FANTASY-COMICS (APRIL) VOL. 2  
NO. 4  
FANTASY-COMICS (MAY) VOL. 2 NO.  
5  
FANTASY-COMICS (JUNE) VOL. 2 NO.  
6  
FANTASY-COMICS (JULY) VOL. 2 NO.  
7  
FANTASY-COMICS (AUGUST) VOL. 2  
NO. 8  
FANTASY-COMICS (SEPTEMBER)  
VOL. 2 NO. 9  
FANTASY-COMICS (OCTOBER) VOL 2  
NO. 10  
FANTASY-COMICS (NOVEMBER)  
VOL. 2 NO. 11  
FANTASY-COMICS (DECEMBER)  
VOL. 2 NO. 12



Destiny #9 (1953)

ZIP #1 (SEPTEMBER) TED WHITE  
ZIP #2 (NOVEMBER) .05 TED WHITE

## 1954

CLEVENTON PROGRESS REPORT #1  
CLEVENTON PROGRESS REPORT #2  
CLEVENTON PROGRESS REPORT #3  
CLEVENTON PROGRESS REPORT #4  
DESTINY #10 (SUMMER) .35  
E.C. FAN JOURNAL, THE (3/6/54) #2  
OR 3  
E.C. SLIME SHEET, THE #1 (NOV/DEC)  
EC FAN BULLETIN #2  
EC PRESS, THE #4 (AUGUST)  
EC SCOOP #1  
EC SCOOP #2 (NOVEMBER)  
IT! #1 (APRIL) .20  
IT! #2 (MAY) .15  
PEON #33 (NOV)  
POTRZEBIE #1

## 1955

CLEVENTON PROGRAM BOOKLET  
E.C. SLIME SHEET, THE #3 (SUMMER)  
.15  
EC SCOOP #5 (APRIL)  
HOOHAH #1 (OCTOBER/NOVEMBER)  
.25  
HOOHAH #2 (DECEMBER/JANUARY)  
.15  
HOOHAH #3 (FEBRUARY/MARCH) .15  
PEON #35 (MAY)  
PEON #36 (DEC)  
POTRZEBIE VOL. 1 NO. 3 (FEB) .15

POTRZEBIE VOL. 1 NO. 4 (MAY)  
POTRZEBIE VOL. 1 NO. 5 (AUGUST)  
POTRZEBIE VOL. 1 NO. 6 (DEC)

## 1956

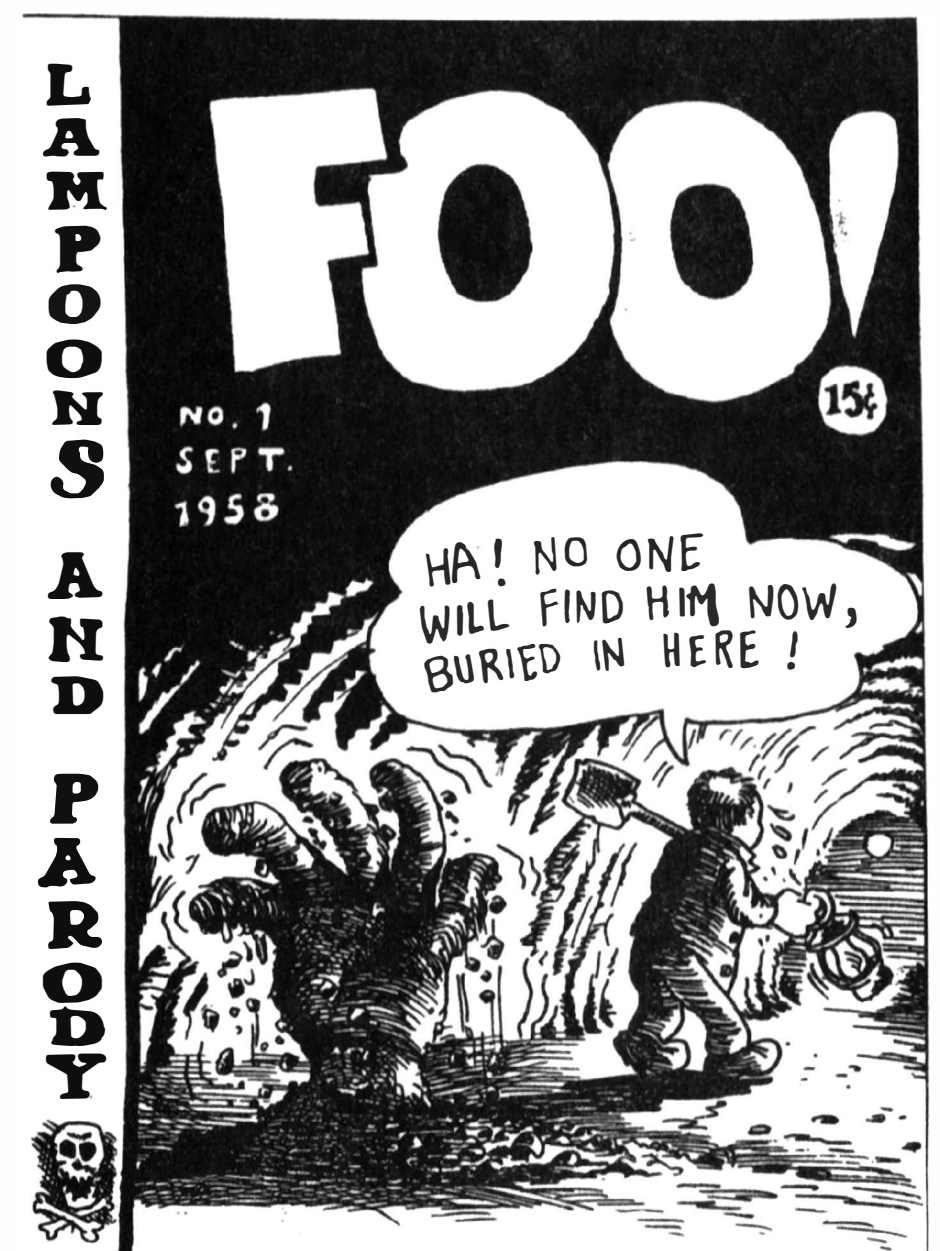
CONCEPT #1  
CONCEPT #2 (DECEMBER) .15  
HOOHAH #4 (APRIL/MAY) .15  
HOOHAH #5 (JULY) .15  
HOOHAH #6 (AUGUST-SEPT.) .15  
HOOHAH #7 (OCTOBER) .15  
JOURNAL OF THE WORLD SF  
SOCIETY #1  
JOURNAL OF THE WORLD SF  
SOCIETY #4

## 1957

CONCEPT #3 (FEBRUARY)  
FAPA MEMORY BOOK  
GOOD LORD! #1 .10  
HOOHAH #8  
PEON #38

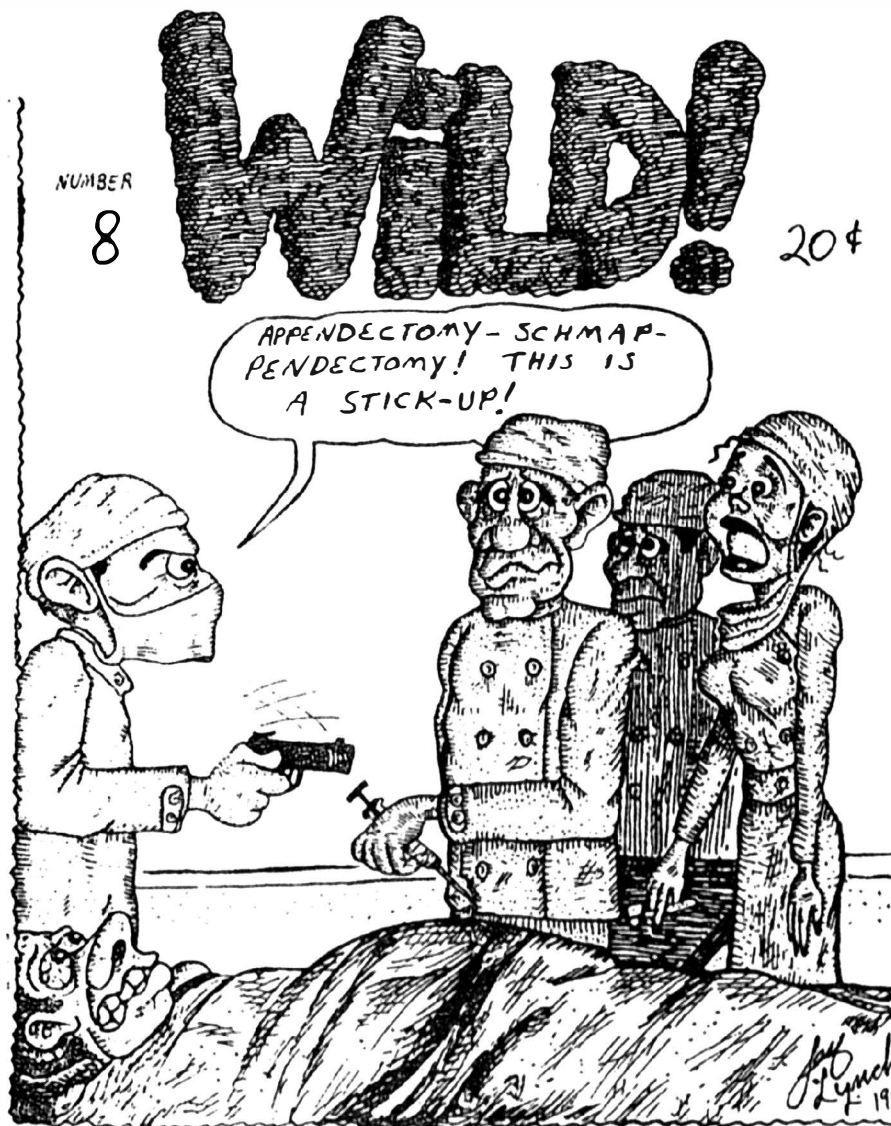
## 1958

AGAMEMNON WEEKLY #1 (Oct)  
CONCEPT #4 (AUGUST)  
FOO! #1 (SEPT)  
FOO! #2 (OCT)  
FOO! #3 (NOV)  
FRANTIC V.1 #2 (October)  
FRANTIC V.1 N.2 (OCTOBER) FALL  
ISSUE  
HK DIGEST #1  
HOOHAH #9 (OCTOBER) COVER  
SAYS JULY



Foo! #1 (1958)





HOOHAH #10  
SEYMOUR MEDNICK FAN CLUB  
BULLETIN #1  
SPOOF! #2 (DECEMBER)  
SPOOF! #3 (FEB) .15 DOUG BROWN  
SPOOF! #4 (AUGUST) .15 DOUG  
BROWN  
STORY ART #1 (Ivie)

## 1959

CONCEPT #5 (FALL)  
CONCEPT #6  
EC SPEC SHEET, THE V.1 #1  
FANFARE - "ASHCAN"  
FANFARE #1  
FANFARE #2 (MAY)  
HARVEY KURTZMAN SATIRE CLUB  
BULLETIN #4  
HK READER, THE V.2 #5  
SATA #10 (JANUARY) .25  
SHAG #1 (FEB) .25  
SHAG #2  
SPECTRE #5  
SQUATRON! #1 (APRIL)  
SQUATRON! #2 (FALL)

## 1960

FRANTIC NEWSHEET  
IMAGE #1 (SPRING) BENSON  
RUMBLE, THE (MAY) LUPOFF  
SATA #11 (JANUARY) .27  
XERO #1 (SEPTEMBER)  
XERO #2 (NOVEMBER)

## 1961

ALTER-EGO #1 (MARCH)  
ALTER-EGO #2 (SUMMER)  
ALTER-EGO #3 (FALL)  
CINDER #2 .25 FORMERLY FLUSH  
CINDER #3 (APRIL) .15

CINDER #4 (MAY) .15  
COMIC ART #1 (APRIL)  
COMIC ART #2 (AUGUST) 125 COPIES  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #1  
(SEPTEMBER)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #35 (V3#11)  
AUGUST  
FANTASY-COMICS (SEPT.-MARCH) V.  
3 #2 (#17)  
FLUSH #1 (FEB/MARCH) CHANGES  
TO CINDER  
FLYER #4 (XERO)  
FLYER #5 (XERO)  
HARBINGER (TO COMIC  
ART/JANUARY) FREE  
IMAGE #2 (JANUARY)  
IMAGE #3 (MARCH)  
IMAGE #4 (APRIL/MAY)  
JACK HIGH #1  
JACK HIGH #2 (APRIL)  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #4 (10/7) 1  
PG  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #5  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #6 (11/17)  
2 PG  
PARSECTION #8 (AUGUST)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #1 (DECEMBER)  
G.B. LOVE  
SATA #13 (NOVEMBER) .27  
SKYBIRD #1 (AUGUST)  
SPOTLITE #1 (FALL/WINTER) .30  
(FOSS, THOMAS)  
WILD! #3 (DEC)  
XERO #3 (JANUARY)  
XERO #4 (APRIL)  
XERO #5 (JULY)  
XERO #6 (SEPTEMBER)  
XERO #7 (NOVEMBER)

## 1962

ALTER-EGO #4 (FALL) 1<sup>st</sup> OFFSET  
ISSUE  
BULLSEYE #1  
(DECEMBER/JANUARY) .30  
BUM STEER #18

No. 1  
25¢

# smudge



COMIC ART #3 (APRIL)  
COMIC ART #4 (DECEMBER)  
COMIC FAN, THE #1 .30  
COMIC HEROES REVISITED #1 (JULY)  
BUBNIS  
COMIC READER, THE #8 (3/18) 2 PG  
(WAS ON THE DRAWING  
BOARD)  
COMIC READER, THE #9 (4/20) 2 PG  
COMIC READER, THE #10 (5/17) 2 PG  
COMIC READER, THE #11 (5/26) 1 PG  
COMIC READER, THE #12 (8/20) 8 PG  
COMIC READER, THE #13 (11/8) 10 PG  
COMIC READER, THE #14 (12/17) 10  
PG  
COMIC WORLD #1 (DEC/JAN) .40  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #2  
(JANUARY)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #3 (MARCH)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #4 (MAY)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #5 (JUNE)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #6 (JULY)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #7  
(SEPTEMBER)  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #8  
(NOVEMBER)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR, THE #45  
(JUNE)  
HEADLINE #1 (JUNE) STEVE GERBER  
IMAGE #5 (WINTER) .50  
JACK HIGH #3 (MAY)  
JACK HIGH #4  
JACK HIGH #5  
JACK HIGH #8  
KOMIX, THE #1  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #1 (JULY)  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #2 (AUGUST)  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #3  
(SEPTEMBER) .30  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #4 (OCTOBER)  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #5  
(NOVEMBER)  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #6  
(DECEMBER)  
MASK AND CAPE #2  
MASQUERADER #1  
MASQUERADER #2  
(NOVEMBER/DECEMBER) .25  
NORB'S NOTES - 1962 ANNUAL  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #7 (1/13) 1  
PG  
ROCKET'S BLAST #2 (JANUARY)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #3 (FEBRUARY)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #4 (MARCH)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #5 (APRIL)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #6 (MAY)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #7 (JUNE)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #8 (JULY)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #9 (AUGUST) .35  
ROCKET'S BLAST #10 (SEPTEMBER)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #11 (OCTOBER)  
ROCKET'S BLAST #12 (NOVEMBER)  
.35  
SMUDGE #1 (JANUARY)

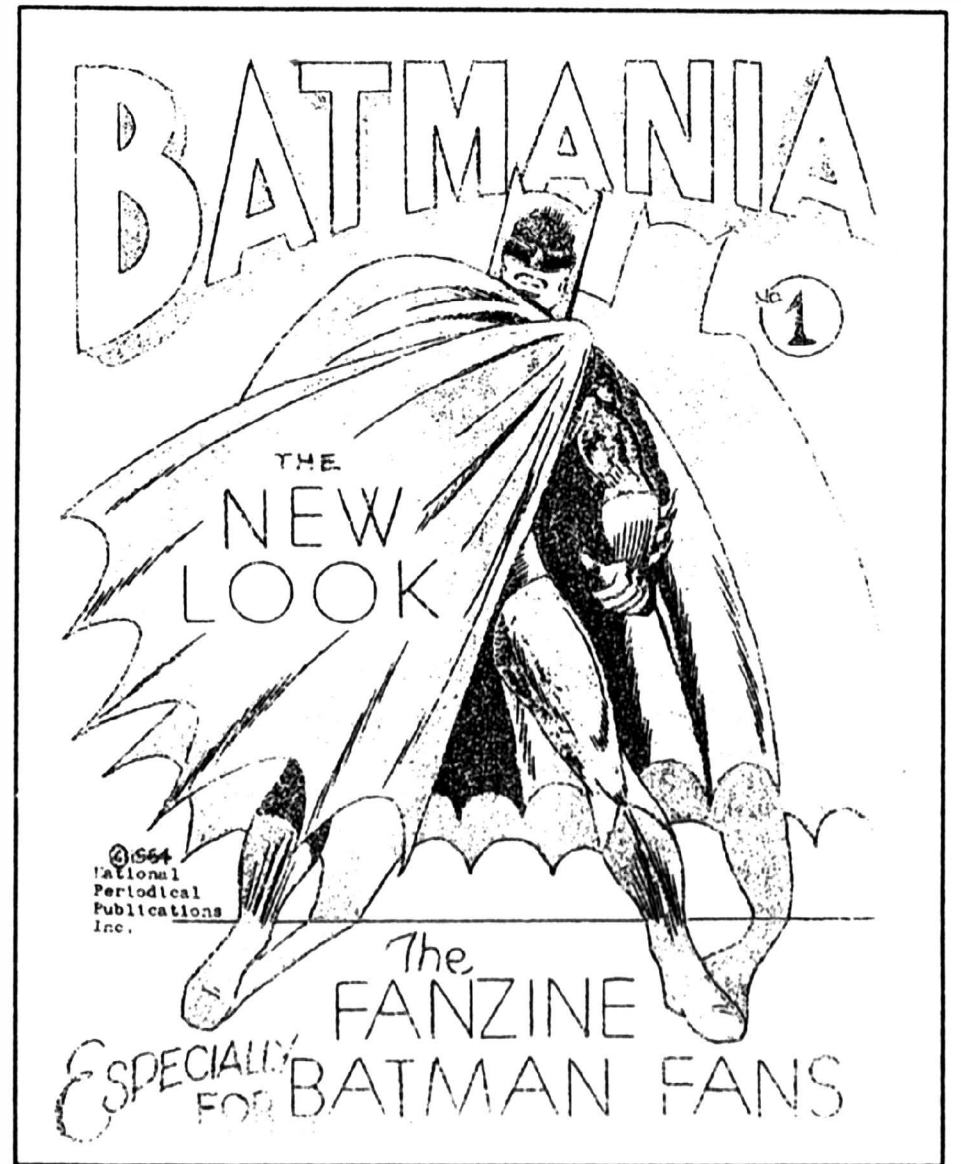


SMUDGE #2 (MARCH)  
 SMUDGE #3 (May)  
 SMUDGE #4 (July)  
 SMUDGE SUPPLEMENT #1  
 SPOTLITE #2 (JULY) R. THOMAS,  
 FOSS  
 SPOTLITE SUPPLEMENT #2A  
 (SEPTEMBER)  
 SUPER HERO #1 (WINTER /63 ISSUE)  
 HECTO  
 WILD! #4 (JAN)  
 WILD! #5 (JAN)  
 WILD! #6  
 WILD! #7 .20  
 WILD! #8 (MAY)  
 WILD! #9 (FALL)  
 WILD! #11 (FALL)  
 XERO #8 (APRIL)  
 XERO #9 (SEPTEMBER)

## 1963

ACTION HERO #1  
 ALTER EGO #5 (REPRINT) .75 S.F. C.A.  
 ALTER EGO #5 .50 (ORIGINAL)  
 ATTENTION WRITERS & ARTISTS  
 (SSC CONTRIB NOTE)  
 BLASE #1 SPIEGELMAN  
 BRAVE ADVENTURE #1 (FEBRUARY)  
 .20  
 COMIC CAPER #1 .25 ARBUNICH-  
 DUBAY  
 COMIC CAPER #2 (DECEMBER) .25  
 COMIC HEROES UNLIMITED #2 .50  
 (SFCA)  
 COMIC READER, THE #15 (1/31) 12 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #16 (2/23) 12 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #17 (5/17) 14 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #18 (8/6) 18 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #19 (9/9) 10 PG

COMIC READER, THE #20 (10/8) 6 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #21 (11/) 18 PG  
 COMIC SPOTLITE #4 FORMERLY  
 SPOTLITE  
 COMIC WORLD #2 (MAY) .40  
 COMIC WORLD #3 (JULY) .40  
 COMICDOM #1 (WEISS COMIC KING)  
 COMICDOM #3  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #9  
 (JANUARY)  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #10  
 (MARCH/APRIL)  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #11  
 (MAY/JUNE)  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #12  
 (SEPT/OCT)  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #13  
 (OCTOBER)  
 COUNTDOWN #2 (DECEMBER) .25  
 (ROSSOW)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #1 (AUGUST)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #2  
 (SEPTEMBER)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #3  
 (OCTOBER)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #4  
 (NOVEMBER)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #5  
 (DECEMBER)  
 DC INDEX, AN AUTHORITATIVE  
 INDEX TO  
 EGO #1 - BILL MEYERS  
 EGO #5 (NOVEMBER) BILL MEYERS  
 ENCLAVE #1 (FEB) JOE PITLATI  
 ENCLAVE #2 (MAY)  
 ENCLAVE #3 (JULY)  
 ENCLAVE #4 (SEPT)  
 ENCLAVE #5 (NOV/DEC)  
 FANTASY HERO #1 (SEPTEMBER) .40  
 DUBAY  
 FANTASY HERO #2 (NOVEMBER) .40  
 FANTASY HERO CHRISTMAS  
 SPECIAL FREE  
 FIGHTING HEROS #1 (APRIL) .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #2 .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #3 .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #4 .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #5 .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #6 .20  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #7 .20  
 HERO #2 (SPRING) LARRY HERNDON  
 HERO #3 (FALL) .30  
 HEROES #5 (JULY) JEFF GELB  
 HEROES' HANGOUT #1 (NOVEMBER)  
 FRANKE  
 HEROES' HANGOUT #1A FREE (PUB  
 NOTICE)  
 KOMIX, THE #2 (APRIL) .40 WRIGHT  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #7 (JANUARY)  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #8  
 (FEBRUARY) DIGEST SIZE  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #9 (MARCH)  
 DIGEST SIZE  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #10/LIMBO #1

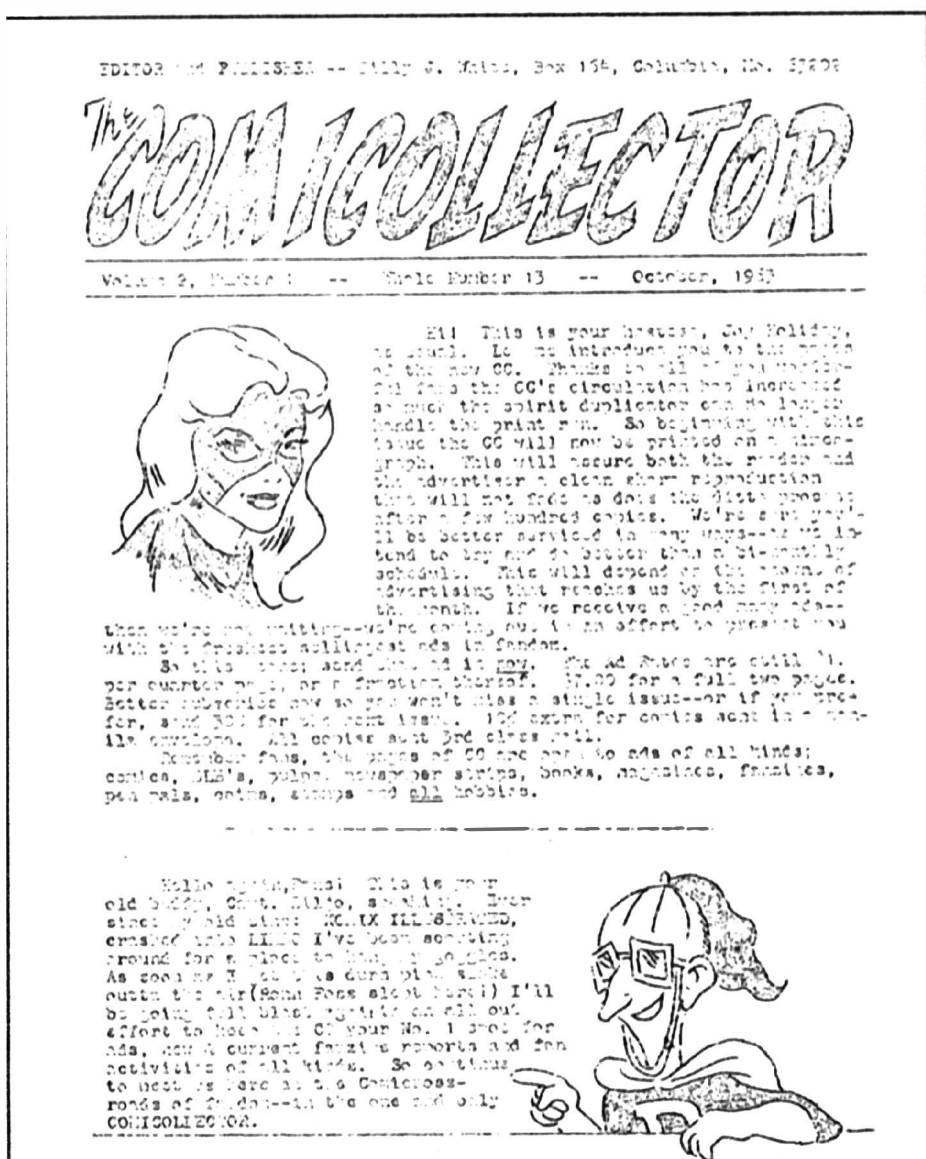


Batman is TM & © by DC Comics.

KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #10/LIMBO #1  
 (NEW COVER)  
 KOMIX THRILLS #1 CHUCK DEAN  
 MASK AND CAPE #3  
 MASQUERADER #3  
 (JANUARY/FEBRUARY)  
 MASQUERADER #4 (MARCH/APRIL)  
 MASQUERADER #5 (MAY/JUNE)  
 ROCK #1  
 ROCK #2  
 ROCK - SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE  
 ROCK - SPECIAL ISSUE  
 ROCKET'S BLAST, THE #17 (APRIL)  
 ROCKET'S BLAST, THE #18 (MAY) SSC  
 #1 AD  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #21 (AUGUST)  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #25 (DECEMBER)  
 .35  
 ROCKETS BLAST SPECIAL #1  
 ROCKET'S BLAST SPECIAL #2 (FALL)  
 SATA/SATYR #14 (APRIL) .27 (BARR,  
 IVIE)  
 SHAZAM! #3 .50 DON GLUT  
 SPOTLITE (COMIC) #3 FOSS, KENTE  
 STAR STUDDED COMICS #1  
 (SEPTEMBER) .35 DR. WEIRD  
 DEBUT BY KELTNER  
 STAR STUDDED COMICS #2  
 (DECEMBER) .35  
 SUPER HERO #2 (SPRING) .30  
 TALES OF TORMENT #1 .25 JOHN E.  
 STOCKMAN  
 TALK WITH B. KRIGSTEIN 1.00 JOHN  
 BENSON  
 WILD! #10 (FEB)  
 XERO #10 (MAY)  
 XERO INDEX (OCTOBER)

## 1964

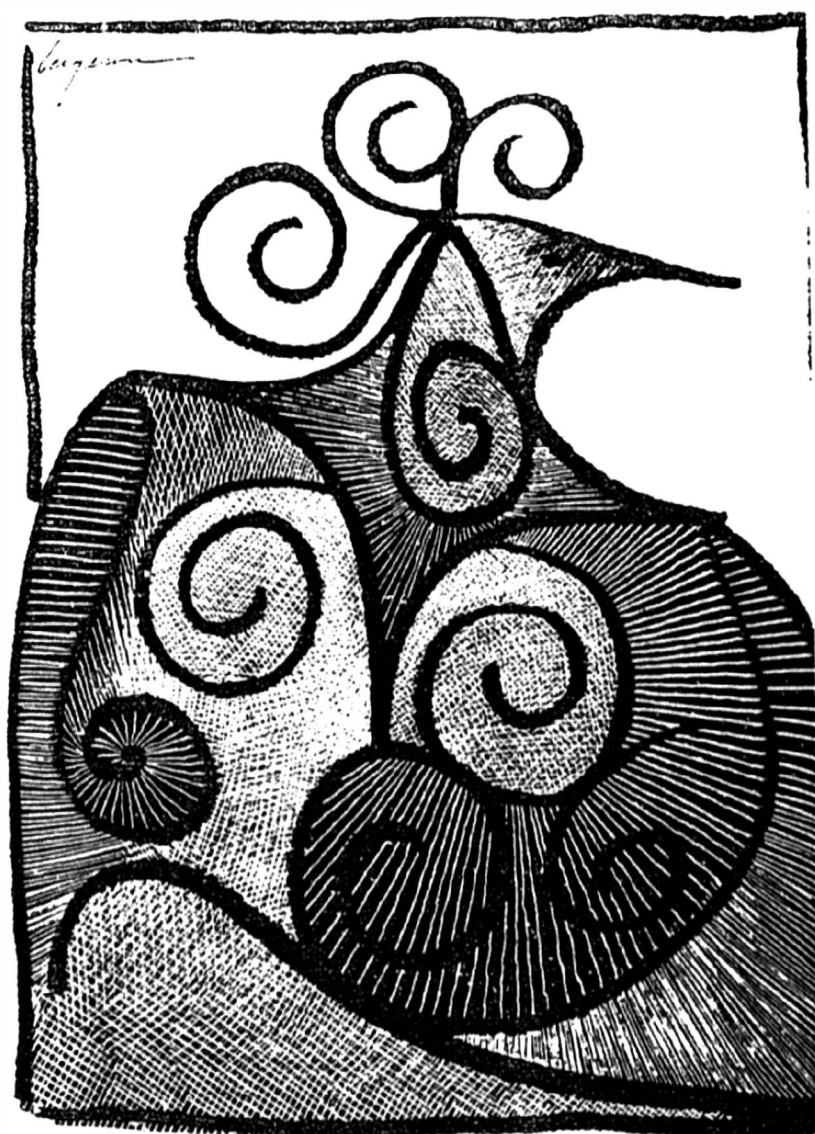
ACTION HERO #2 (MARCH)  
 ACTION HERO #3  
 ACTION HERO #4 (SEPTEMBER) .30



The Comicollector #13 (October 1963)



ACTION HERO #5 (NOV/DEC) .30  
 ALTER EGO #6 .50 (MARCH)  
 ALTER-EGO #1 (MARCH) BILJO  
 WHITE REPRINT  
 ALTER EGO #7  
 ALTER EGO #7 (REPRINT) .50  
 BATMANIA #1 (JULY) FREE  
 BATMANIA #2 (OCTOBER) .30  
 BLOOD AND THUNDER #6 (SPRING)  
 .40  
 CAPA-ALPHA #1 (OCTOBER) NM  
 CAPA-ALPHA #2 (NOVEMBER)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #3 (DECEMBER)



Enclave 7

COMET #1 (WINTER) TOM LAURIA  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #1 .15  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #2  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #3 .15  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #4  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #5  
 COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW #6  
 (FALL?) .15  
 COMIC ART #5 (OCTOBER) .50  
 COMIC FAVORITE, THE #2 (OCT/NOV)  
 #13 (1963)  
 COMIC HERO #1 (FEBRUARY) .25  
 COMIC READER, THE #22 (1/64) 10 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #23 (3/64) 4 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #24 (4/64) 10 PG  
 COMIC READER, THE #25 (5/64) 14 PG  
 (LAST BAILS)  
 COMIC READER, THE #26 (6/5) 12 PG  
 (JOHNSON)  
 COMIC READER, THE #27 (JULY)  
 COMIC READER, THE #28 (AUGUST)  
 COMIC READER, THE #29 (AUGUST)  
 COMIC READER, THE #30 (OCTOBER)  
 COMIC READER, THE #31  
 (NOVEMBER)  
 COMIC READER, THE #32  
 (DECEMBER)  
 COMIC WORLD #4 CAPT. MARVEL JR  
 COMIC WORLD #5 SKYMAN  
 COMIC WORLD #6 INC (JUNE) .40

COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #14  
 (FEBRUARY)  
 COMICCOLLECTOR, THE #15 (MARCH)  
 COMI-RAMA #4 (JAN/FEB) FOSS  
 COVER  
 COMI-RAMA #5 (JULY/AUG) RON  
 KETTLE  
 COMI-ZINE #1  
 COMI-ZINE #1 (JUNE/JULY)  
 COUNTDOWN #1 (JUNE)  
 COUNTDOWN #2 (JULY)  
 COUNTDOWN #3 (AUGUST) .35  
 (GRASS GREEN)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #6  
 (JANUARY)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #7  
 (FEBRUARY)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #8 (MARCH)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #9 (APRIL)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #11 (JUNE)  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #13  
 (NOVEMBER) BUTTS  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #14  
 (SUMMER) BOB BUTTS  
 DOWN UNDER #1 .40  
 ENCLAVE #6 (MAY/JUNE)  
 ENCLAVE #7 (SEPT)  
 ENCLAVE #8 (AUTUMN)  
 FAN TO FAN #4  
 FANDOM PRESENTS #1 (DECEMBER)  
 1.00  
 FANTASTIC #1 (JANUARY) .25 SATA  
 HISTORY  
 FANTASTIC #2 (FEBRUARY) .25  
 MCGEEHAN ZINE LIST  
 FANTASTIC #3 (MARCH) .25  
 FANTASTIC #4 (APRIL) .25  
 FANTASTIC #5 (JUNE/JULY) .25  
 CORONA BACOVER  
 FANTASY HERO #3  
 (JANUARY/FEBRUARY) .40  
 FANTASY HERO #4 (SUMMER)  
 FANTASY HEROES HANGOUT #1



Fighting Hero Comics #9 (1964)



Outre #1 (1964)

FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #1  
 (FEBRUARY) .50  
 FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #2 (JUNE)  
 .50  
 FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #3 (WINTER)  
 .50  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #8 (FEB) .20  
 (KENTE)  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #9 .20  
 (DEMON)  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #10 .20 (2<sup>ND</sup>  
 EYE STRIP BY WHITE)  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #11 .20  
 BLACK SCORPION BY MILLER,  
 BUBNIS  
 FIGHTING HERO COMICS #12 .20  
 (DIMENSION MAN BY FOSS)  
 FLARE COMICS #1 .20 (AUGUST) JEFF  
 GELB  
 FORUM #3 (DECEMBER) A.C.B.F.A.C.  
 NEWSLETTER  
 GOD COMICS #4 KUHFIELD  
 HARBINGER #4 (APRIL?)  
 HB PRESENTS #1 (NOVEMBER) .10  
 HEADLINE #3 (SUMMER) .35 FOSS,  
 PERRIN, GERBER  
 HERO #4 (SUMMER) .40 HERNDON  
 HEROES' HANGOUT #2 (MARCH) .40  
 HEROES' HANGOUT #4 .20  
 HEROES' HANGOUT SUPPLEMENT  
 (SEPTEMBER) .10  
 JEDDAK #6 (#5 ON COVER)  
 JEDDAK #6 (AUGUST) .40  
 KOMIK HEROES OF THE FUTURE #6  
 DITKO!!  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #11  
 (FEBRUARY)  
 KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #12 (APRIL) .35  
 MASK AND CAPE #4 (OCTOBER) .30  
 (BLACK PHANTOM)  
 MASQUERADER #6 .50 (JUNE)



MASTERMIND #1 (WINTER) .40  
 MASTERMIND #2  
 MEN OF MYSTERY #1 .25 (MAY)  
 MEN OF MYSTERY #2 .35  
 (DECEMBER)  
 NEW YORK COMICON BOOKLET  
 (BUBNIS)  
 ODD #8 .20  
 OUTRE #1 (SPRING) FOSS COVER  
 RB-CC #30 .45  
 RB-CC #31 .45  
 RB-CC #32 .45  
 RB-CC #33 .45  
 RB-CC #34 .45  
 RB-CC #35 .45  
 RB-CC ANNUAL #1 1.25  
 RB-CC SPECIAL #1 .40  
 REVIEW #1 DOUG MOENCH  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #26 (JANUARY) .35  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #27 (FEBRUARY)  
 .35  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #28 (MARCH)  
 ROCKET'S BLAST #29 (APRIL) .35  
 ROCKETS BLAST SPECIAL #3  
 (SUMMER) AA COMICS  
 SATA #15 (FEBRUARY) .36  
 SAVAGE PRINCESS #1 (DECEMBER)  
 VOSBURG  
 SLAM-BANG #1 (APRIL) .50 RICK  
 WEINGROFF  
 SLAM-BANG #2 (AUGUST) .50  
 STAR STUDDER COMICS #3 (MARCH)  
 .35  
 STAR STUDDER COMICS #4 (JUNE)  
 .50  
 STAR STUDDER COMICS #5 (SEPT) .50  
 STRIPPER, THE #1 (AUGUST) .10  
 SUPER NOVA #2  
 TALES OF TORMENT #2  
 TALES OF TORMENT #3



Heroes' Hangout #5 (1965)  
 Roger Brand cover

TALES OF TORMENT #4  
 TALES OF TORMENT #4 & 1/2  
 TALES OF TORMENT #5  
 TOWER COMICS #1 (MARCH)  
 VICTOR'S VIEWS #1 (DATE PER  
 R.L.M.)  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #2  
 (SEPTEMBER) .20  
 WHO'S WHO IN COMIC FANDOM  
 WHO'S WHO IN COMIC FANDOM  
 SUPPLEMENT (JULY)  
 WONDERFUL WORLD OF KOMIX,  
 THE #1 (SUM) .50  
 WRITERS FELLOWSHIP BULLETIN #2  
 WRITERS FELLOWSHIP BULLETIN #3  
 YANCY STREET JOURNAL #3 .10  
 YANCY STREET JOURNAL #4  
 (SEPTEMBER) .10  
 YANCY STREET JOURNAL #5  
 (NOVEMBER) .15  
 YANCY STREET JOURNAL #6  
 (DECEMBER) .15  
 YMIR #1 .25 JOHNNY CHAMBERS

## 1965

A TALK WITH H. KURTZMAN – JOHN  
 BENSON  
 ALL STARS #1 .50 (VOSBURG, FOSS,  
 DITKO)  
 ALTER EGO #8 .60  
 ALTER EGO #9 (SUMMER) .75 M  
 ARGOSY PRICE GUIDE, THE 5.00  
 BATMANIA #3 (JANUARY) .30  
 BATMANIA #4 (APRIL) .30  
 BATMANIA #5 (JULY) .30

BATMANIA #6 (OCTOBER) .30  
 BATMANIA #7 (NOVEMBER) .30  
 BATWING #1 (MARCH) .35 HERNDON  
 BATWING #2 (OCTOBER) .35  
 BATWING #3 (DECEMBER) .35  
 CAPA-ALPHA #4 (JANUARY)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #5 (FEBRUARY)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #6 (MARCH)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #7 (APRIL)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #9 (JUNE)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #10 (JULY)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #11 (AUGUST)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #12 (SEPTEMBER)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #13 (OCTOBER)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #14 (NOVEMBER)  
 CAPA-ALPHA #15 (DECEMBER)  
 COMIC FAN #2 (SUMMER) DITKO  
 INTERVIEW  
 COMIC FEATURE #1 (JANUARY) .25  
 COMIC FEATURE #2 (APRIL) .25  
 COMIC FEATURE #4 (WINTER)  
 COMIC POST #1 (GELB, ROGERS)  
 COMIC READER, THE #33 (JANUARY)  
 COMIC READER, THE #34  
 (FEBRUARY)  
 COMIC READER, THE #35 (MARCH)  
 FOSS COVER  
 COMIC READER, THE #36 (APRIL)  
 DITKO COVER  
 COMIC READER, THE #37 (MAY)  
 COMIC READER, THE #38 (JUNE)  
 COMIC READER, THE #39 (JULY)  
 COMIC READER, THE #40 (AUGUST)  
 COMIC READER, THE #41  
 (SEPTEMBER)  
 COMIC READER #42 (ROTHERMICH  
 1ST)  
 COMIC READER #43  
 COMIC READER #44  
 COMIC READER #45  
 COMIC VENDOR #2  
 COMIC WORLD #7 (JANUARY)  
 COSMOSTILETTO #8 (FALL?) .20  
 CRIMESTOPPER #1



Odd #11 (1965)



Ditko art in a ditto fanzine

The Comic Reader #36 (1965)



CRYPT #1 (MIKE MAXIM)  
CYCLOPS MAGAZINE (ED LAHMANN,  
CA. 1965)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #14  
(SUMMER) BOB BUTTS  
DETROIT TRIPLE FAN FAIR -  
BROCHURE  
DUAL IDENTITY #2 (JUNE/AUGUST)  
.35  
EPIC COMICS #2 .25  
ERB-DOM #1 - NEW EDITION  
EYE SPECIAL, THE #1 (SPRING)  
FAN TO FAN #5 (OFFSET SPEED  
MARVEL ORIGIN)  
FANDOM'S SPECIAL #1 (MARCH)  
CARDOZO  
FANTASY FANDOM CROSSROADS #2  
FANTASY FILM JOURNAL #4  
(NOVEMBER) .25  
FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #4  
(SUMMER) .50  
FLARE COMICS #2 (MARCH)  
HERRING COVER  
FOOB (MARVEL WOLFMAN)  
FORUM #4 ACADEMY NEWSLETTER  
FORUM #5  
FORUM #6 (MARCH)  
FORUM #7 (APRIL/MAY)  
FORUM #8 (AUGUST)  
FUTURA #7 (DECEMBER)  
GOLDEN AGE #1 (SPRING) .75  
GRIDLEY WAVE, THE #17 (MAY)  
GRIDLEY WAVE, THE #18 (AUGUST)  
GRIDLEY WAVE, THE #19  
(DECEMBER)  
GUIDEBOOK TO COMICS FANDOM,  
THE .50 (SUMMER)  
HERODOM #1  
HEROES' HANGOUT #3 (APRIL) .40  
HEROES' HANGOUT #5 .20 (INCL. YSG  
13 & VOC 7)  
HEROES ILLUSTRATED #1 (SPRING)  
.50 PRYOR

INCOGNITO #3 (SEPTEMBER)  
SCHELLY  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED #13 (MARCH)  
MAGNUM OPUS #1 (AUGUST)  
MEN OF MYSTERY #3 .45 (AUGUST)  
GELB, TESAR  
ODD #7 .15  
ODD #8 (Vol. 1) .20  
ODD #9  
ODD #10 (JUNE/JULY) .20  
ODD #11 (FEB) LANZ LETTER  
OPARIAN, THE #1 (SEPTEMBER)  
MIKE ROYER  
RB-CC #36 .45  
RB-CC #37 .45  
RB-CC #38 .45  
RB-CC #39 .45  
RB-CC #40 .45  
RB-CC #41 .45  
RB-CC #42 .45  
RB-CC #43 .45  
RB-CC #44 .45  
RB-CC #45 .45  
SANCTUM #2 (GELB, SCHELLY)  
SLAM-BANG #3 (JANUARY) .50  
SLAM-BANG #4 (JULY) .50  
SLAM-BANG #5 (SEPTEMBER) .50  
SMASHEROO #2  
SMASHEROO #3  
STAR STUDDER COMICS #6  
(SUMMER/FALL) .50  
STAR STUDDER COMICS #7 (JULY)  
.50  
SUPER HERO #4 (WINTER) .35  
(BUCKLER)  
SUPER HEROES ANONYMOUS #1  
(FEB) .30 SCHELLY  
SUPER HEROES ANONYMOUS #2  
(MAY) .30  
SUPER-THEATER #3 .35  
SUPER-THEATER #4 (WINTER) .40  
GELB  
TALES OF TORMENT #6  
THROUGH THE LENS (AUGUST)  
PERRIN NEWSLETTER  
TRUMPET #1 (FEB)  
TRUMPET #2 (JUNE)  
TRUMPET #3 (DEC)  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #3 (JANUARY)  
.25  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #4 (APRIL) .25  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #5 (AUGUST)  
.25  
WEBSPINNER #2 (AUGUST) GENE  
KLEIN  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #7  
(MARCH) .15  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #8 (MAY)  
.15  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #9 (JULY)  
.15  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #10  
(SEPTEMBER) .15  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #11  
(NOVEMBER) .15

YMIR #2 (FEBRUARY) .25 MEMORICH  
YMIR #3 .25  
YMIR #4 .25 (JOHNNY CHAMBERS,  
FOSS ART)

## 1966

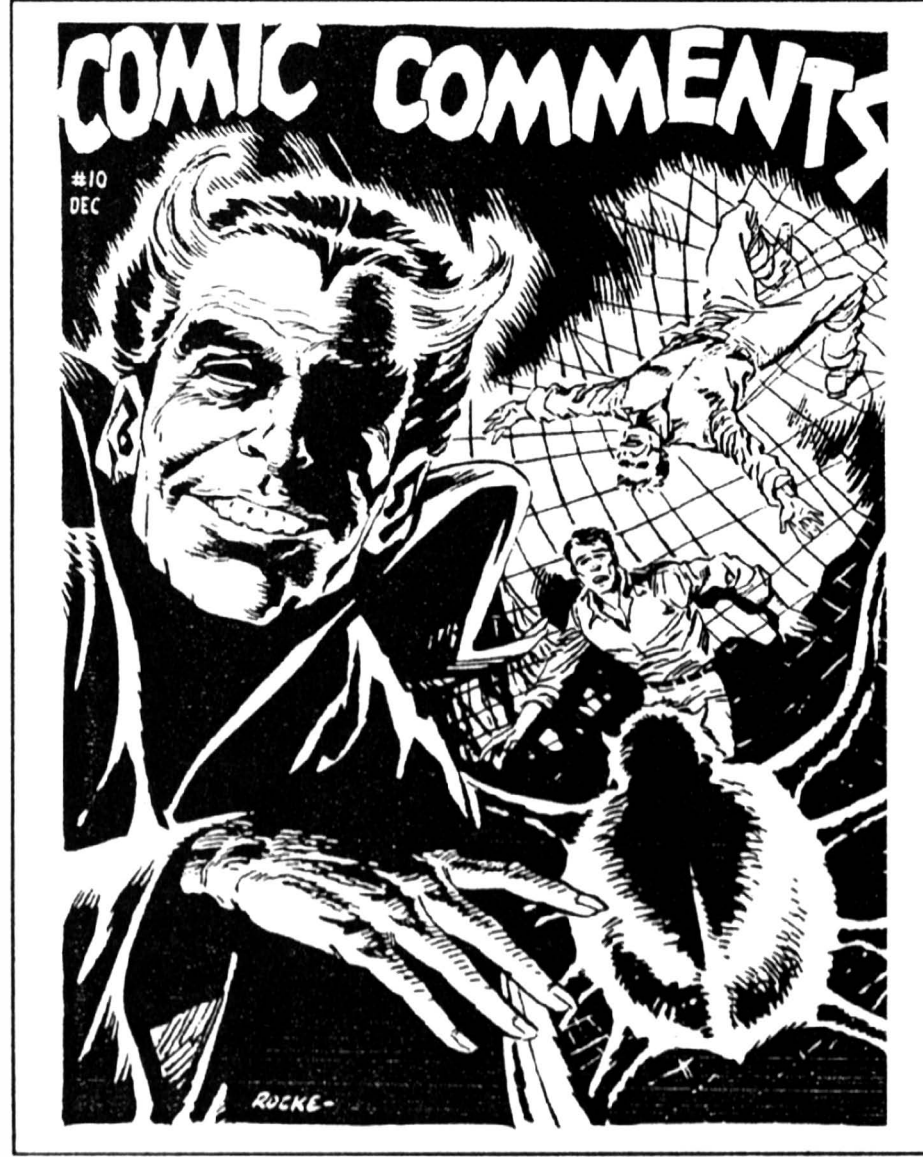
ACTION HERO #7 (JULY/AUGUST)  
YEAR UNCERTAIN  
ADVENTURE HEROES CAPERS V.1 #1  
(OCTOBER) .50  
BATMANIA #8 (JANUARY) .30  
BATMANIA #9  
BATMANIA #10  
BATMANIA #11 (JULY)  
BATMANIA #12 (OCT)  
BATMANIA #13 (DEC)  
CAPA-ALPHA #16 (JANUARY)  
CAPA-ALPHA #17 (FEBRUARY)  
CAPA-ALPHA #18 (MARCH)  
CAPA-ALPHA #19 (APRIL)  
CAPA-ALPHA #20 (MAY)  
CARTOONIST, THE #1 (SPRING) .75  
FOSS STRIP  
COLLECTOR #1 (MARCH) FRANKE  
COMIC ART #6 .50  
COMIC BOOK #1 ALAN HANLEY  
COMIC COMMENTS #3 (APRIL)  
COMIC COMMENTS #4 (JUNE)  
COMIC COMMENTS #5 (JULY)  
COMIC COMMENTS #6 (AUGUST)  
COMIC COMMENTS #7 (SEPTEMBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #8 (OCTOBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #9 (NOVEMBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #10 (DECEMBER)  
COMIC FEATURE #5 (GELB, "PAN"  
AD)  
COMIC READER #46 (FEB) .30  
COMIC READER #47  
COOPER'S HERO HOBBY #7  
CRYPT-ARMAGEDDON 1/2 DOCTOR  
WEIRD STORY  
CYCLOPS #1  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #15 (1ST BOB  
GREENE ISH)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #16  
(AUGUST/SEPT)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #17  
(SEPT/OCT)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #18 (OCT)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #19 (NOV)  
LASER BEGINS  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #20  
(DECEMBER) K GREENE  
DCTC BULLETIN #1 (NOV-DEC) LANZ  
FANDOMS SPECIAL #3  
FANTASY FORUM #1 SCHELLY  
FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #5 (SPRING)  
.60  
FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #6  
(SUMMER/FALL) .60  
FAWN THE DARK-EYED  
GOLDEN AGE #2 1.25 (FOSS, WHITE)  
G. B. LOVE



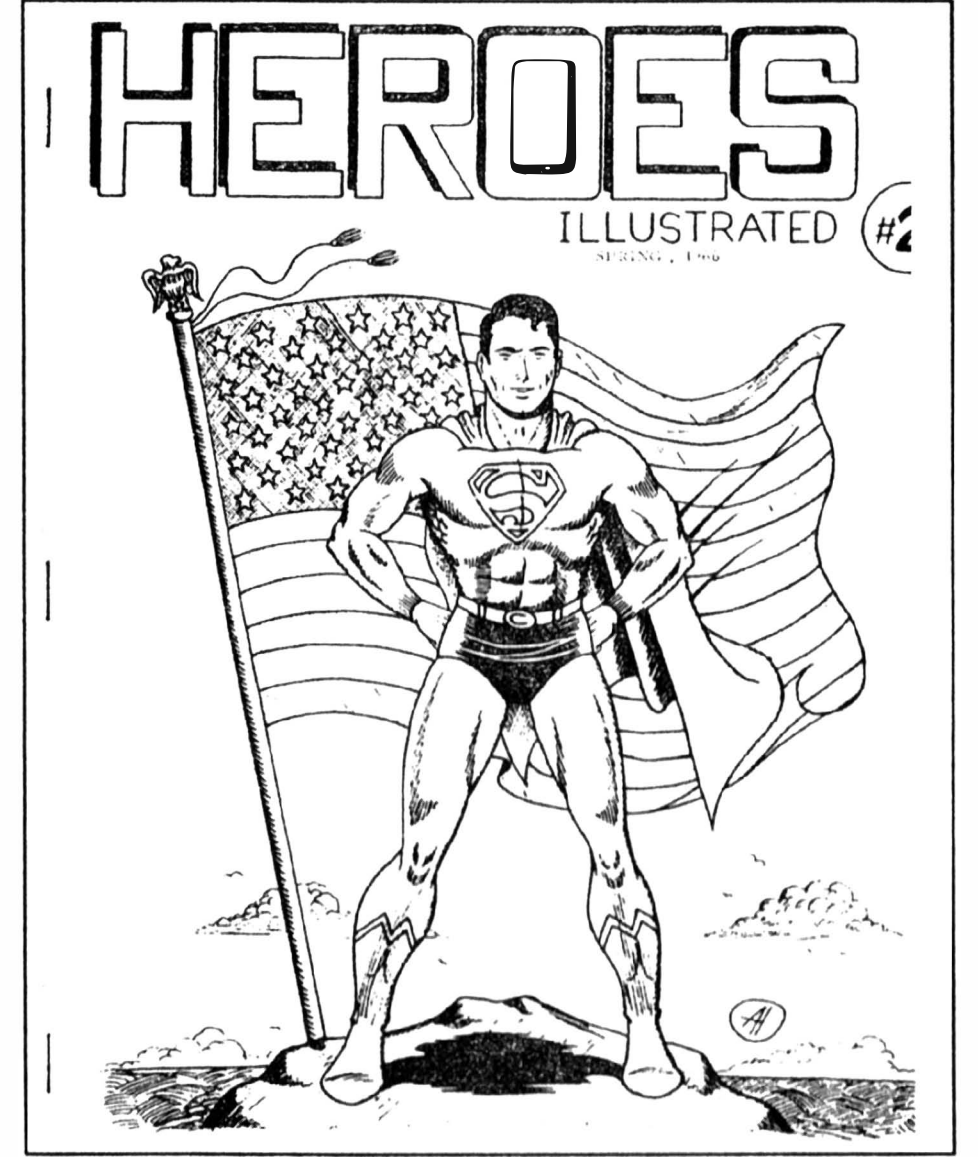




Batmania #11



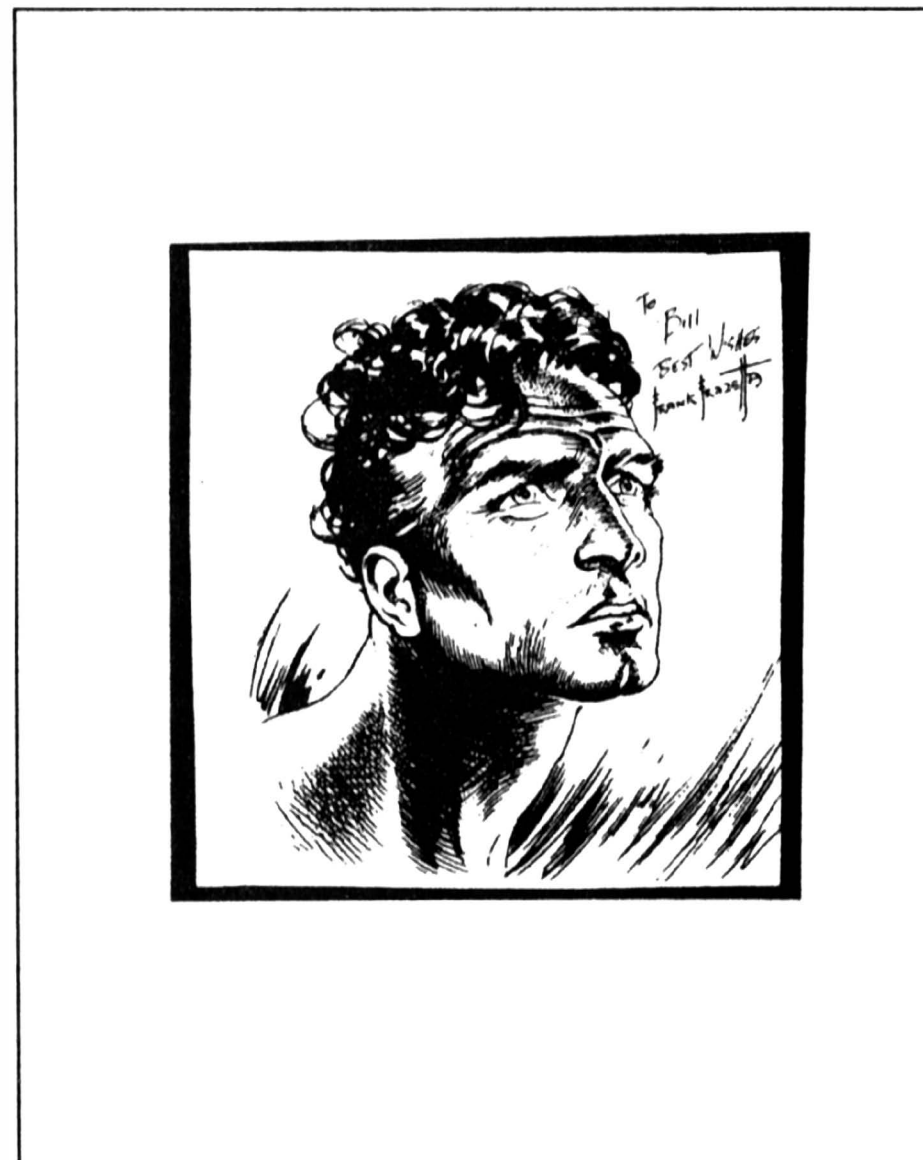
Comment Comments #10



Heroes Illustrated #2



On The Drawing Board



Spa Fon #2



The! #1

GOSH WOW! #1 .50 SCHOENFELD  
GREMLIN #1 .40 GARY BROWN  
GRIDLEY WAVE, THE #20 (MAY)  
HEROES' HANGOUT #6 (AUG) (WITH  
VOC #8)  
HEROES ILLUSTRATED #2 (SPRING)  
.50  
ILLUSTRATED COMIC COLLECTOR'S  
HANDBOOK V.2  
INCOGNITO #4 (SPRING) .35 SCHELLY  
INCOGNITO EXTRA #1 (SEPTEMBER)  
SCHELLY  
INTRIGUE #1 .40 BUCKLER, PERRIN  
KOMIK HEROZ OF THE FUTURE #1  
MARVEL GAZETTE, THE #2 .20  
MEN OF MYSTERY #4 (OCTOBER) .50  
MONTAGE #1  
NOPE #3  
NYCON COMICS #1 .50

ON THE DRAWING BOARD #51  
(DITTO)  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #52  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #53  
(OCTOBER)  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #54  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #55  
(DECEMBER)  
ORK #2 (JANUARY)  
PANELOGIST V.1 (#1-7)  
RAPPORT II (first issue) ROBERT  
KEITH GREENE  
RB-CC #46 .45  
RB-CC #47  
RB-CC #48  
RB-CC #49  
SANCTUM #5 (APRIL) .15  
SANCTUM #6 (FALL) .15

SON OF VANGUARD #1 (FALL) FREE  
SUPPLEMENT TO #1  
SOONER COMICS #3 (FALL)  
SPA FON #2 (SUMMER) FRAZETTA  
COVER  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #8 (MARCH)  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #9  
(SUMMER) .50  
SUPER HERO #5 (FALL) .35  
SCHWABEROW  
TALES OF TORMENT #7  
THE! #1 CHESNEY COVER  
TINT #6 (SEPTEMBER) .50  
TRUMPET #4  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #6  
(FEBRUARY) .25  
WEIRDOM #4 (NOVEMBER) .40  
WITZEND #1 (SUMMER) 1.00 WALLY  
WOOD





WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE (JUNE)  
V1. #1 1.00  
WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE (FALL)  
V1. #2 1.00  
WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE  
(WINTER) V1. #3 1.00  
YANCY STREET JOURNAL #12  
(JANUARY) .15  
YMIR #5 (JANUARY)  
YMIR v2. #1 .40 MEMORICH  
ZENITH (FORMERLY SANCTUM) #4  
(FEB) .25

## 1967

APEX #1  
APEX #2  
ARTIST #1 (?) STEVE FRITZ  
BATMANIA #16 (JULY) .30  
BOMBSHELL #6 (SCHELLY/GELB)  
BOMBSHELL #7 (MAY) .40  
BOMBSHELL #8 (JULY) IMMORTAL  
CORPSE  
BOMBSHELL #9 (SEPT) .40  
IMMORTAL CORPSE  
BOMBSHELL #10 (SEPT) .40  
CHAMPION #2  
COLLECTOR, THE #1 (JULY)  
COLLECTOR, THE #2 (AUGUST)  
COLLECTOR, THE #5/6  
COMIC BOOK #2  
COMIC COMMENTS #11 (JANUARY)  
COMIC COMMENTS #12 (FEBRUARY)  
COMIC COMMENTS #13 (APRIL)  
COMIC COMMENTS #14 (JUNE)  
COMIC COMMENTS #15  
(SEPTEMBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #16 (OCTOBER)  
FIRST RUN ENDS

COMIC FAN'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL  
LIT (VOL. 1) 1.00  
COMIC LORE #2  
COMIC VENDER #4  
CONCUSSION #1 MIKE ROBERTSON  
CONCUSSION #2  
CONCUSSION #3  
CRYPT #1  
DANGLING CONVERSATION, THE #1  
.15 DAVE ESSER  
DANGLING CONVERSATION, THE #2  
.15  
DANGLING CONVERSATION, THE #3  
DANGLING CONVERSATION, THE #4  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #21  
(JANUARY/FEBRUARY)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #22 (MARCH)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #24 (JUNE)  
GREENE'S LAST ISSUE  
ERBDOM #21 (JULY) .50  
FANDOM ANNUAL #1 2.25  
FANDOM CALLING #1 (MARCH) MIKE  
RAUB  
FANDOM CALLING #2 (APRIL)  
FANDOM CALLING #3 (JUNE)  
FANDOM CALLING #4 (JULY)  
FANDOM CALLING #5 (AUG/SEPT)  
FANDOM CALLING SAMPLE COPY  
FANDOMONIUM #2 (SUMMER/FALL)  
FANDOM'S SPECIAL #4 .50 (HERRING,  
VOSBURG)  
FANTASY ART NEWS (F.A.C.T.  
NEWSLETTER)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #99  
(JANUARY)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #105  
(AUGUST) .15  
FANTASY FORUM #2 (JANUARY) .20  
SCHELLY  
FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #7 (SPRING)  
.75  
FIGHTING HERO COMICS - SPECIAL  
EDITION #1 (OFFSET  
COLLECTION) S.F.C.A.



Ed Lahmann cover

FLASH COMICS SPECIAL - LANZ  
FORBUSH GAZETTE #1 (JANUARY)  
.30  
FORBUSH GAZETTE #2 .25  
FUTURA #8 (LAST ISSUE)  
GRAPHCO BULLETIN V.2 #4 .20  
(LANZ)



On The Drawing Board #12/59 (1967)

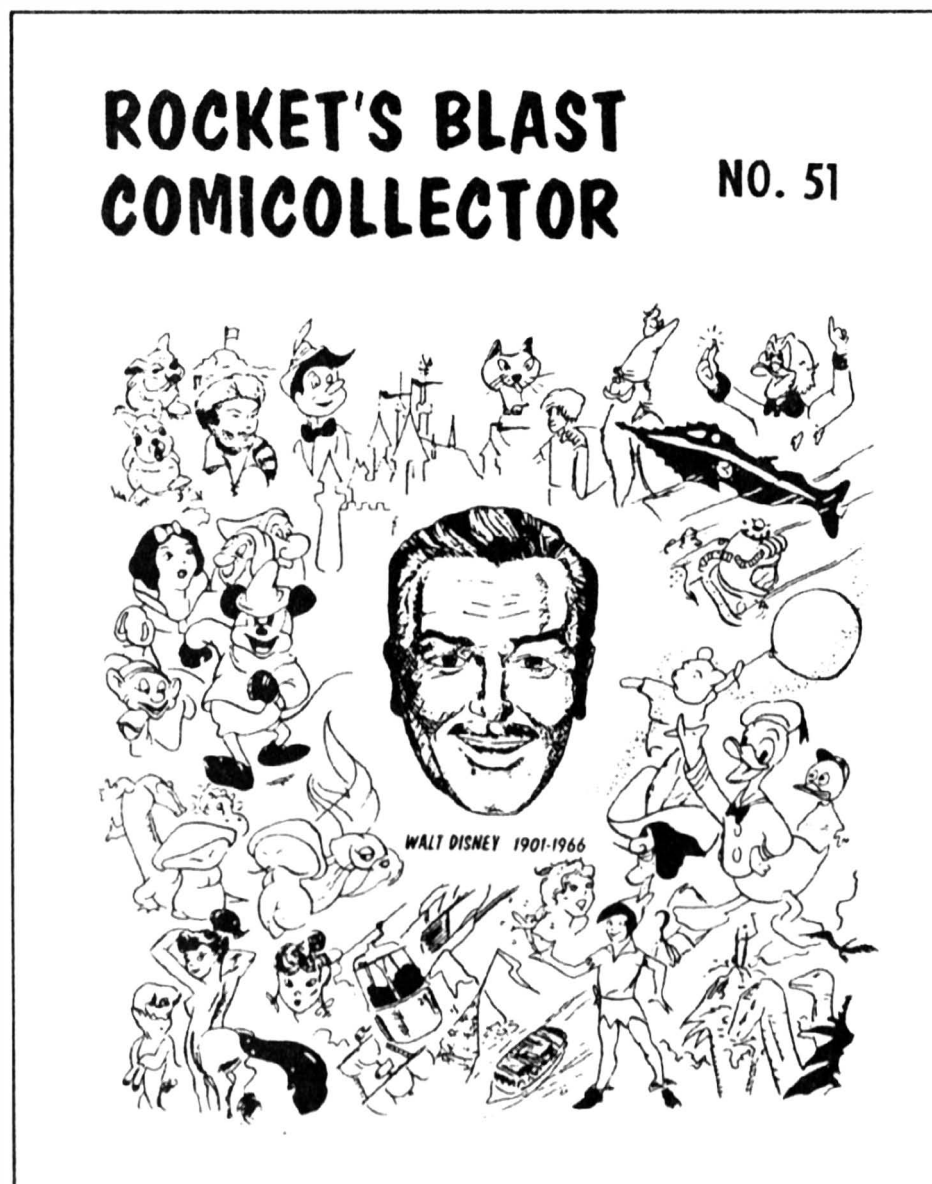
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #8  
(FALL) .75  
HEROES' HANGOUT #7 .25  
HEROES UNLIMITED #1 PAUL NEARY  
- BRITISH  
HEROES UNLIMITED #2 (SEPT/OCT)  
HEROIC #1 .30 (LANZ, WIZIT AD,  
ROGERS)  
HEROIC #2 (MAY)  
HUH? #2 (APRIL) MARK LAMBERTI  
INTRIGUE #2 (JANUARY) .40  
BUCKLER  
JACK'S HIGH #0 (KUHFIELD)  
JACK'S HIGH #1 (KUHFIELD) .20  
JOURNEY INTO COMICS #1  
(SUMMER)  
KALEIDOSCOPE #1  
MANEKI-NEKO #1  
MARVELMANIA #5 (LANZ ART)  
NEWFANGLES #1 (MARCH) DON &  
MAGGIE  
NEWFANGLES #2 (MAY)  
NEWFANGLES #3 (JULY)  
NEWFANGLES #4 (SEPTEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #5 (NOVEMBER)  
NYCON COMICS #4 .10  
NYCON COMICS #5 .50  
OAF #1  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #56  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #57  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #58  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #59  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #60



ON THE DRAWING BOARD #61 (JUNE)  
.25  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #62  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD #63 (DEC)  
PANEL ART EXAMINER, THE #6 .25  
(LANZ)  
RB-CC #51  
RB-CC #52  
RB-CC #52  
RB-CC #53  
RB-CC #54 VF  
RB-CC SPECIAL #1 (2NDPRINTING,  
OFFSET) .65  
ROCKET'S BLAST SPECIAL EDITION  
#1 .65  
SANCTUM #7 (JULY) .25 (SCHELLY,  
LANZ)  
SANCTUM #8 (OCTOBER) LANZ  
COVER  
SATURDAY'S WORLD #3  
(SEPTEMBER) .85  
SENSE OF WONDER #1 (APRIL) .35  
FOSS COVER, SCHELLY  
SENSE OF WONDER #2 (AUGUST) .35  
(FIRST PRINT) G  
SENSE OF WONDER #2 (NOVEMBER)  
.35 (REPRINT 9/68)  
SENSE OF WONDER #3 (DECEMBER)  
.35  
SPECTRE #14 MIKE APPEL  
SPECTRE #15  
SPECTRE #16  
SPECTRE #17  
SPECTRE #18  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #10  
(WINTER) .50  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #11  
(SUMMER) .50  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #12  
SUPER HERO #6 BUCKLER  
TALES OF TORMENT #8 (APRIL)  
TRUMPET #5 (APRIL)  
TRUMPET #6 (JUNE)



Spectre #15 (1967)



RB-CC #51 (1967)

VOICE OF COMICDOM #9  
WINE-VINE, THE #1 (6/10/67)  
SCHELLY NEWSLETTER  
WITZEND #2 1.00  
WITZEND #3  
WIZIT #1 (AUGUST) Chuck Rogers  
WONDERMENT #2 .35  
WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE  
(SUMMER) V2 #1 1.00  
WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE  
(SPRING) V1. #4 1.00

## 1968

ASTERISK #1 (JULY)  
ASTERISK #2 (AUGUST)  
ASTERISK #3  
ASTERISK #4  
ASTERISK SAMPLER  
BOMBSHELL #12 (1967 NYCON  
REPORT)  
CAPT. BILJO PRESENTS #1 (FALL)  
CHAMPION #3 (MAY) .25  
CHAMPION #4  
CHAMPION #6  
COLLECTOR, THE #7 SCHELLY  
ARTICLE  
COLLECTOR, THE #12 (SCHELLY  
COVER)  
COLLECTOR, THE #14 (SCHELLY  
FULL PG)  
COMIC ART #7 .75 LAST ISSUE  
COMIC CRUSADER #2 (SUMMER)  
COMIC CRUSADER #3 (FALL)  
COMIC CRUSADER #4 (DECEMBER)  
COMIC CRUSADER #5 (SPRING) .35  
COMIC CRUSADER #6 (SUMMER) .35  
COMIC CUTS #2 (APRIL)  
COMIC FANDOM NEWSLETTER #8 .06  
CRITIQUE #1 (JAN) KEN VIOLA

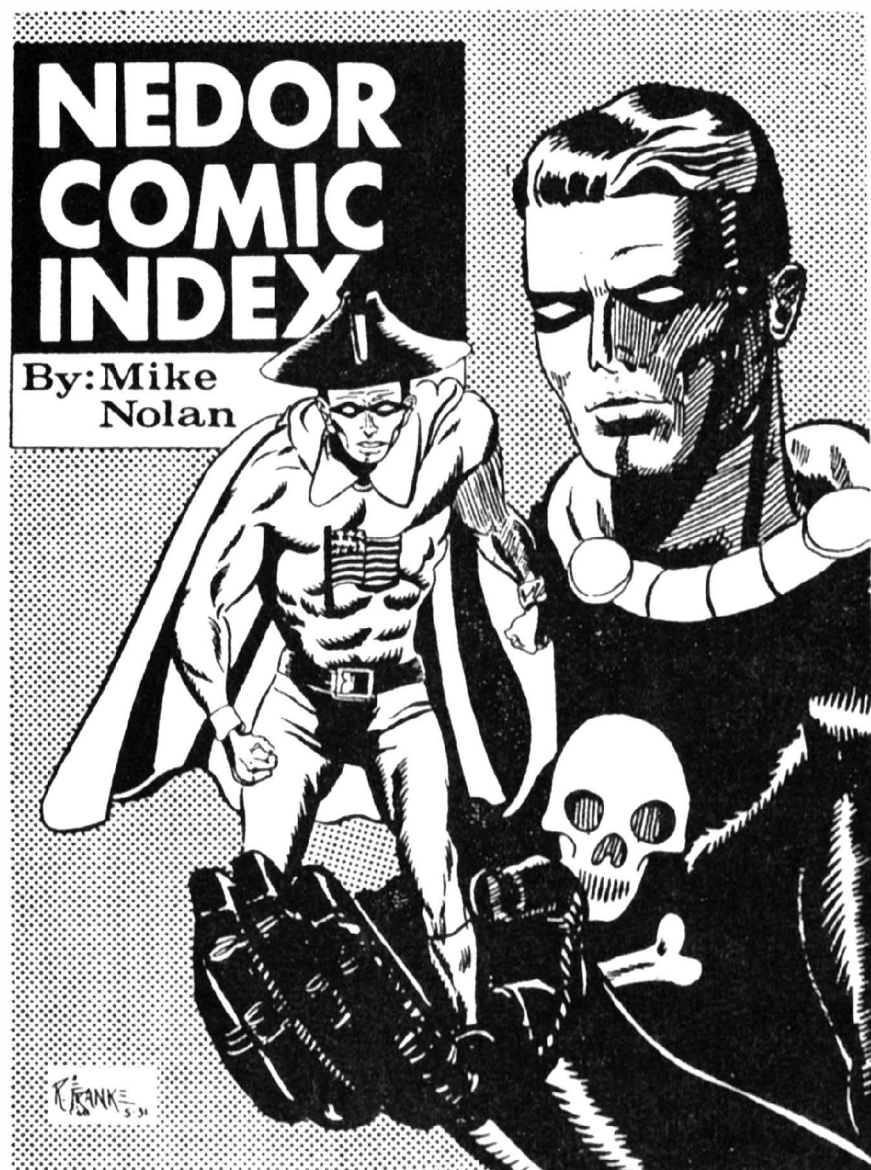
ENTERPRISE #1 (OCT) .35  
("INSANE"/SCHELLY)  
EXP #1 (SEPTEMBER) .25 GELB  
FANDOM CALLING #6 (APRIL)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #112 (APRIL)  
1.00  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #116  
(AUGUST) 1.00  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #118  
(OCTOBER)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR #120  
(DECEMBER) 1.00  
FUNNYWORLD #10 (NOVEMBER) .75  
GALACTIC ILLUSTRATIONS #1  
(MARCH)  
GOLDEN AGE #3  
GOSH WOW! #2 (SUMMER) BODE  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #9  
(SUMMER) .75  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #9  
(SUMMER) ALT ERNATE COVER  
HEROES ILLUSTRATED #3 (SPRING)  
.60  
HEROES UNLIMITED #4 (MARCH)  
ILLUSTRATED COMIC COLLECTORS  
HANDBOOK #3  
INKLING #2 (OCTOBER) FREE  
JOURNEY INTO COMICS #2  
MARVEL MAIN #3 (JULY)  
MUSEUM #3 .25 (KORKIS, HARRER)  
NEDOR COMIC INDEX (JUNE) NOLAN  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #1 (NOV) .25  
NEWFANGLES #6 (JANUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #7 (FEBRUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #8 (MARCH)  
NEWFANGLES #9 (APRIL)  
NEWFANGLES #10 (MAY)  
NEWFANGLES #11 (JUNE)  
NEWFANGLES #12 (JULY)  
NEWFANGLES #13 (AUGUST)  
NEWFANGLES #14 (SEPTEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #15 (OCTOBER)



RB-CC #54 (1967)



NEWFANGLES #16 (NOVEMBER)  
 NEWFANGLES #17 (DECEMBER)  
 NUCLEUS #1 .35 WHEATLEY  
 NUCLEUS #2 .35  
 ODD #12 LAST ISSUE  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #64  
 (JANUARY)  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #65  
 (MARCH) HANERFELD'S FIRST  
 ISSUE  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #66



ON THE DRAWING BOARD #67  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #68  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #69 (ZINE  
 LIST)  
 ON THE DRAWING BOARD #70  
 PANDORA #1  
 RB-CC #55 .75  
 RB-CC #56 .75 (MARCH)  
 RB-CC #57  
 RB-CC #58  
 RB-CC #59  
 RB-CC #60  
 RB-CC #61  
 RB-CC #62 .65  
 SENSE OF WONDER #4 (MAY/JUNE)  
 .35  
 SENSE OF WONDER #5 (AUGUST) .40  
 SENSE OF WONDER #6 .40  
 SPECTRE #19  
 SPECTRE #20  
 SPECTRE #21  
 SPIDEY FAN V.2 #9 (MORRA)  
 STAR STUDDER COMICS #13 (JUNE)  
 .50  
 STAR STUDDER COMICS #14  
 SUPER ADVENTURES #9 (FALL)  
 MARV WOLFMAN  
 SUPER HERO #7 OFFSET  
 SUPER HERO #3 (JANUARY?) .35?  
 TALES OF TORMENT #9  
 TRUMPET #7 (MAY)

TRUMPET #8  
 VALOR #1  
 VANGUARD #2 (FEB)  
 VICTOR'S VIEWS #2  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #10  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #11 (MARCH)  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #12  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #13  
 VOICE OF COMICDOM #14 (DEC)  
 WITZEND #4 1.00  
 WITZEND #5 (OCTOBER) 1.00

## 1969

ALTER EGO #10 1.50 (KANE, KUBERT,  
 WOOD)  
 AMRA V. 2 #50 (MAY) .50  
 ASMODEUS #3 (JUNE)  
 ASTERISK #6 (MARCH)  
 ASTERISK VOL. 1 #1 (SUMMER) .60  
 CAPA-ALPHA #59 SCHELLY COVER  
 CAPT. BILJO #2 (SPRING) FREE,  
 DITTO  
 CAPT. BILJO PRESENTS #2  
 CHAMPION #5 (JANUARY)  
 CHAMPION #7  
 CHAMPION #8  
 COLLECTOR, THE #17 (FALL)  
 COLLECTOR'S GUIDE: THE FIRST  
 HEROIC AGE 5.00  
 COLLECTOR'S HANDBOOK, THE,  
 VOL. 4  
 COMIC ART #1 (NOT THE  
 THOMPSONS)  
 COMIC ARTIST, THE #1 (MAY) .50  
 INFANTINO ISSUE  
 COMIC ARTIST, THE #2 (SEPT) .50  
 KUBERT ISSUE



COMIC WORLD #1 CAPT. GEORGE  
 COMIC WORLD #2 CAPT. GEORGE  
 COMIC WORLD #4 CAPT. GEORGE  
 COMIC WORLD #8 JENNINGS  
 COMIC WORLD #9 JENNINGS



Super-Adventures #9  
 Cover by Dick Giordano

COMIC WORLD #10  
 DALLASCON BULLETIN #1  
 DALLASCON BULLETIN #2  
 (SUMMER)  
 DALLASCON BULLETIN #3  
 DALLASCON BULLETIN #4  
 DASFS JOURNAL #2 (JUNE) .50  
 DATELINE: COMICDOM #25 (NOV) 1st  
 RAUB ISSUE  
 DISNEYDOM #1 .50  
 ENTERPRISE #3 (COCKRUM)  
 ENTERPRISE MONTHLY #1 (MAY)  
 ENTERPRISE MONTHLY #2 (JUNE) .40  
 EON #3 (SHULL, DITKO) .60  
 FANDOM CALLING #7 (JUNE)  
 FANDOM'S AGENT #8  
 FANTASTIC FANZINE #8  
 FANTASY COLLECTOR #122  
 (FEBRUARY) 1.00  
 FREON #1  
 FUNNYWORLD #11 (MAY)  
 GOLDEN AGE #4 (SUMMER)  
 CHESNEY ARTICLE  
 GOLDEN AGE #5 (WINTER)  
 GORGON II, THE  
 GOSH WOW! #3 (SUMMER) 1.00  
 SCARP CON, METZGER  
 GRAPHIC SHOWCASE #2 (SUMMER)  
 1.00  
 GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #10  
 (SPRING) 1.00  
 GUTS #5 (SUMMER) .40 (CHESNEY,  
 FOSS SPLASHES)  
 INKLING #3 (APRIL) .10  
 JOURNAL OF THE V.F.B.M.  
 (NEWFANGLE SUPP)  
 MARVELMANIA MAGAZINE #1  
 (OCTOBER)  
 NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
 WHIZZBANG #2



NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #3  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #4  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #5  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #6  
NEWFANGLES #18 (JANUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #19 (FEBRUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #20 (MARCH)  
NEWFANGLES #21 (APRIL)  
NEWFANGLES #22 (MAY)  
NEWFANGLES #23 (JUNE)  
NEWFANGLES #24 (JULY)  
NEWFANGLES #25 (AUGUST)  
NEWFANGLES #26 (SEPTEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #27 (OCTOBER)  
NEWFANGLES #28 (NOVEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #29 (DECEMBER)  
NIMROD #12 (APRIL) .50  
OMNIFAN #1 (MAY) .30 (KRAFT)  
OMNIFAN #2 (JUNE)  
PANDORA #2/3  
PARAGON ILLUSTRATED #1  
RB-CC #63  
RB-CC #64  
RB-CC #65  
RB-CC #66  
RB-CC #67  
SENSE OF WONDER #7 .40  
SQUA TRONT #3 (2.00)  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #15 .75  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #16  
(NOVEMBER) .75  
TALES OF TORMENT #10  
TALES OF TORMENT #11 (FALL)  
TITAN COMICS #5 (JULY)  
TRUMPET #9  
TRUMPET #10  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #15 (MAY) .30

WITZEND #6 (SPRING) 1.00 (DITKO,  
WOOD, EISNER)

## 1970

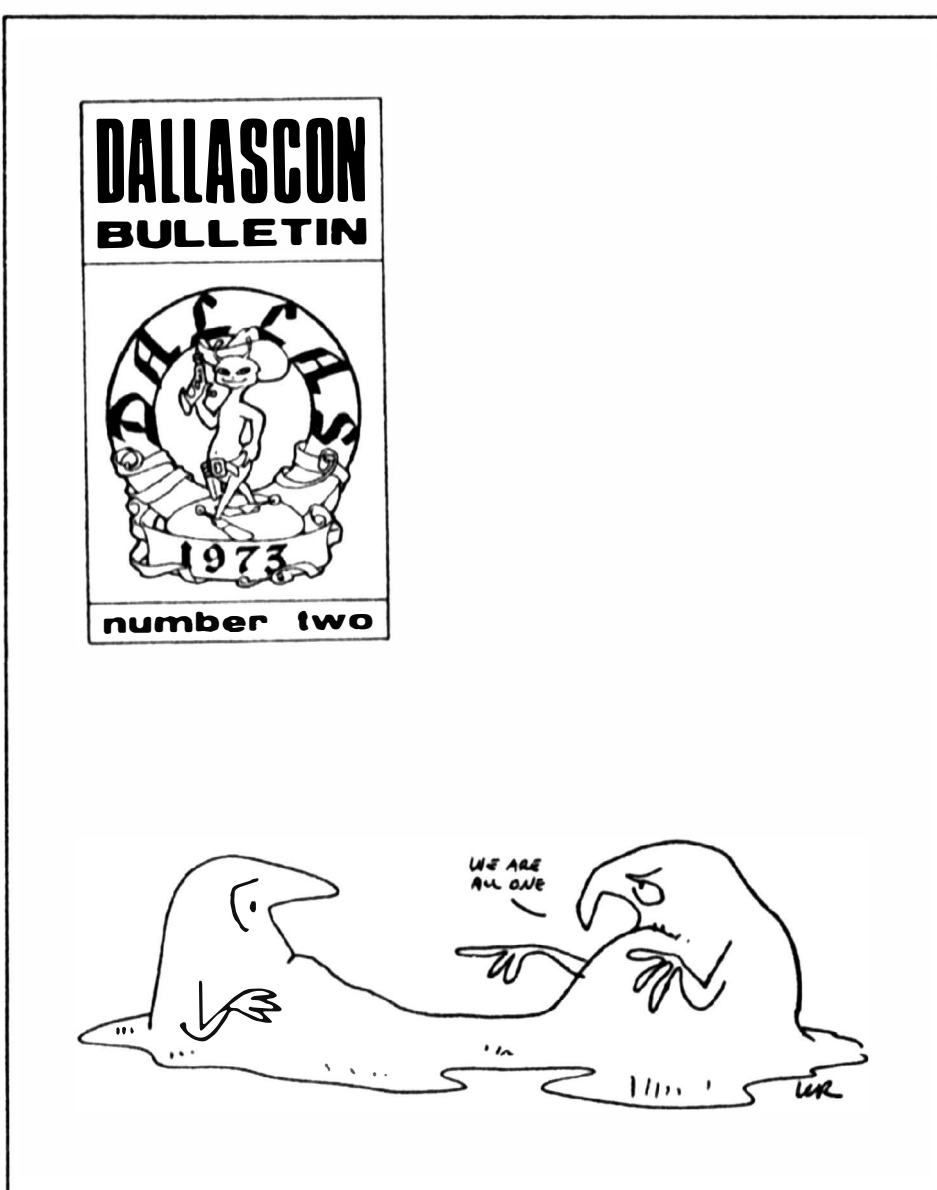
1970 COMIC ART CONVENTION  
BOOK  
4-D (FOSS ARTICLE, DATE  
APPROXIMATE)  
ABNORMAL COMIX #1  
ALL-STARS #2 "UNDERGROUND"  
ISSUE  
ALTER EGO #10  
AUCTION BLOCK #2 (MARCH)  
AUCTION BLOCK #3 (FOSS LETTER)  
CAPT. GEORGE PRESENTS #31/32 1.00  
RAYMOND  
CAPT. GEORGE PRESENTS #37 .25  
CAPT. GEORGE PRESENTS #38/39  
\$1.00 (FRAZETTA)  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD #3  
.20  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD #11  
.25  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD #12  
.25  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD #14  
.25  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD #19  
.25  
COLLECTOR, THE #18 .25  
COLLECTOR'S CHRONICLE, THE #3  
COMIC ARTIST, THE #3  
COMIC BOOK #3  
COMIC COMMENTS #17 (JULY) FIRST  
NEW ISSUE  
COMIC COMMENTS #18 (AUGUST)  
COMIC COMMENTS #19 (AUGUST)  
COMIC COMMENTS #20  
(SEPTEMBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #21 (OCTOBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #22 (NOVEMBER)  
COMIC COMMENTS #23 (DECEMBER)  
COMIC WORLD #11  
COMIC WORLD #12  
COMIC WORLD #13  
COMIQUE #6  
DALLASCON BULLETIN #5  
DALLASCON BULLETIN #6  
DALLASCON BULLETIN #7  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #26  
DOCTOR WEIRD #1 (FALL) .35  
FANTASTIC FANZINE #10 1.25  
FANTASTIC FANZINE #11 .75  
FUNNYWORLD #12 (SUMMER) 1.00  
(1ST PHOTO OFFSET ISSUE)  
GOLDEN AGE #6 TYZOR BY STARLIN  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #11  
(SUMMER)  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #12  
(FALL)  
GREMLIN #2 (DECEMBER) .50  
INCOGNITO #8 (SUMMER) .40  
SCHELLY

MINOTAUR #10 VF (SEPT) .50  
MINOTAUR #6 F (JANUARY) .30  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #7 .35  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #8  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #9  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #10



Jack Kirby art

NEWFANGLES #30 (JANUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #31 (FEBRUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #32 (MARCH)  
NEWFANGLES #33 (MARCH #2)  
NEWFANGLES #34 (APRIL)  
NEWFANGLES #35 (MAY)  
NEWFANGLES #36 (JUNE)  
NEWFANGLES #37 (JULY)  
NEWFANGLES #38 (AUGUST)  
NEWFANGLES #39 (SEPTEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #40 (OCTOBER)  
NEWFANGLES #41 (NOVEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #42 (DECEMBER)  
NUCLEUS #3/4 .40  
NUCLEUS #5  
OVERLAND EXPRESS #4  
PANELOLOGIST VOL. 2 NOS. 7/8  
(SEPT) .25  
PARAGON ILLUSTRATED #2  
PHOENIX #2 (MARCH)  
PHOENIX #3 (FEBRUARY) .40  
RB-CC #68  
RB-CC #69  
RB-CC #70  
RB-CC #71  
RB-CC #72  
RB-CC #73  
RB-CC #74  
RB-CC #75



Dallascon Bulletin #2 (1969)





RB-CC #76

SAN DIEGO CON #1 PROGRAM BK

SQUA TRONT #4

SUMMER DAZE (GELB  
"UNDERGROUND")

TALES OF TORMENT #12

WITZEND #7 (SPRING) 1.50

WONDERFUL WORLD OF COMIX #4/5  
(FALL)

## 1971

A DECADE OF COMICS FAN AWARDS

AUCTION BLOCK #4

CINEFANTASTIQUE V1. #3

CINEFANTASTIQUE V1. #4

COLLAGE #5 SFCA .65

COLLAGE #6

COLLAGE #7

COLLAGE #8

COLLAGE #9

COLLAGE #10

COLLAGE #11

COLLAGE #12

COLLAGE #13 (DECEMBER) .65

COMIC COMMENTS #24 (APRIL)

COMIC COMMENTS #25 (JUNE)

COMIC COMMENTS #26

(SEPTEMBER)

COMIC COMMENTS #27 (OCTOBER)

COMIC COMMENTS #28 (DECEMBER)

LAST ISSUE

COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #1

(SEPT) .50

COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #2 (OCT)

.50

COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #3 (NOV)

.50

COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #4 (DEC)

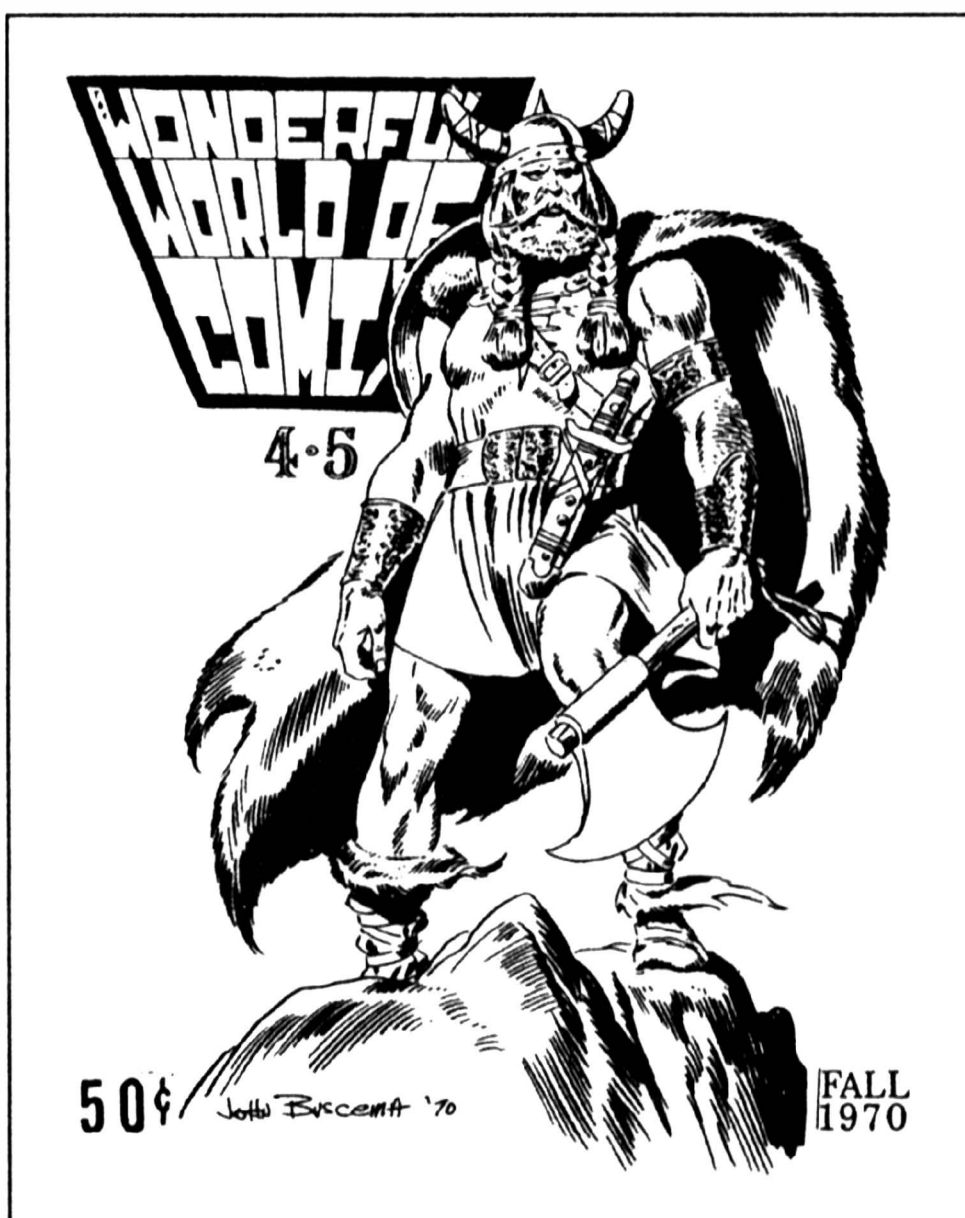
.50

DALLASCON BULLETIN #9

DALLASCON BULLETIN #10

DALLASCON BULLETIN #11

DATELINE: COMICDOM #28 (OCT)



DATELINE: COMICDOM #29 (NOV)

DIRECTIONS #4 (MAY)

DOCTOR WEIRD #2 (SUMMER) .35

EAGLE, THE #1 (JANUARY) .35

ELECTRIC STORIES #1 (MARCH) .60

EPOCH #2

FAN INFORMER #27 (MARCH)

FANDOM ANNUAL #4 - 4.00

FANTASTIC EXPLOITS #16 (NOT  
SURE OF YEAR)

FANTASTIC FANZINE #12 - 1.25

FLASHBACK #2

FUNNYWORLD #13 (SPRING) 1.25

GEORGE #1

GEORGE #2

GEORGE #4 (JUNE)

GEORGE #5 (JULY)

GEORGE #6 (AUGUST)

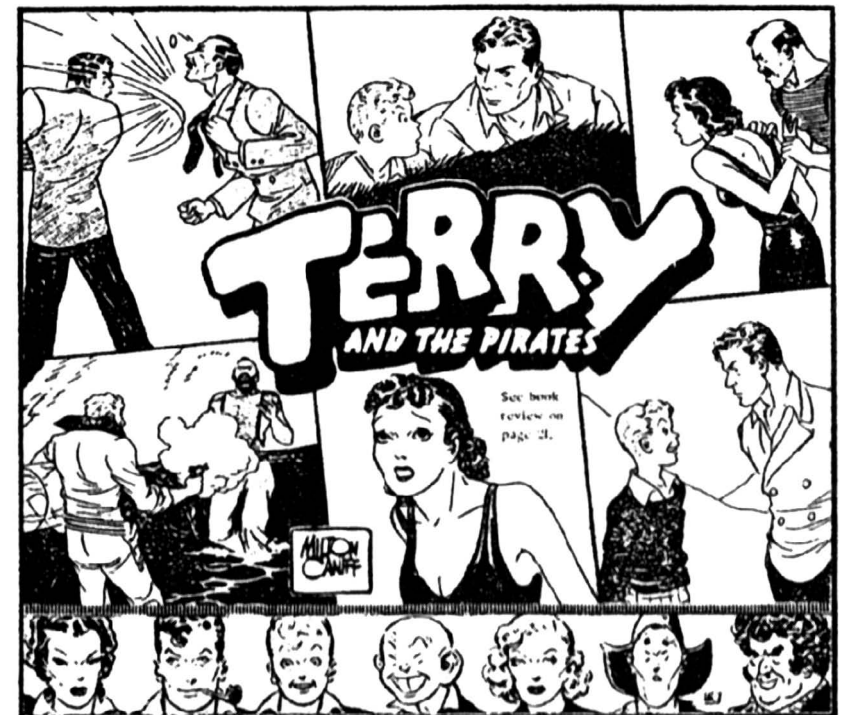
GEORGE #7 (SEPTEMBER)

GEORGE #8 (OCTOBER)

GEORGE #9 (NOV/DEC/JAN)

## The New CAPTAIN GEORGE'S WHIZZBANG

No. 11 35 cents



GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #14

(SPRING) 1.25 ADAM LINK STRIP  
REPRINT

GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #1 (MAY)

.25 KYLE

GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #2 (JULY)

GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #3

(OCTOBER)

GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #4

(DECEMBER) .40

INCOGNITO #9 (JAN) .25 DITTO,  
SCHELLY

INFINITY BOUND #1 (SEPTEMBER)

.60 VOSBURG

ISSUE, THE #1 (RONN FOSS)

MODERN COLLECTOR'S REVIEW #4

NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

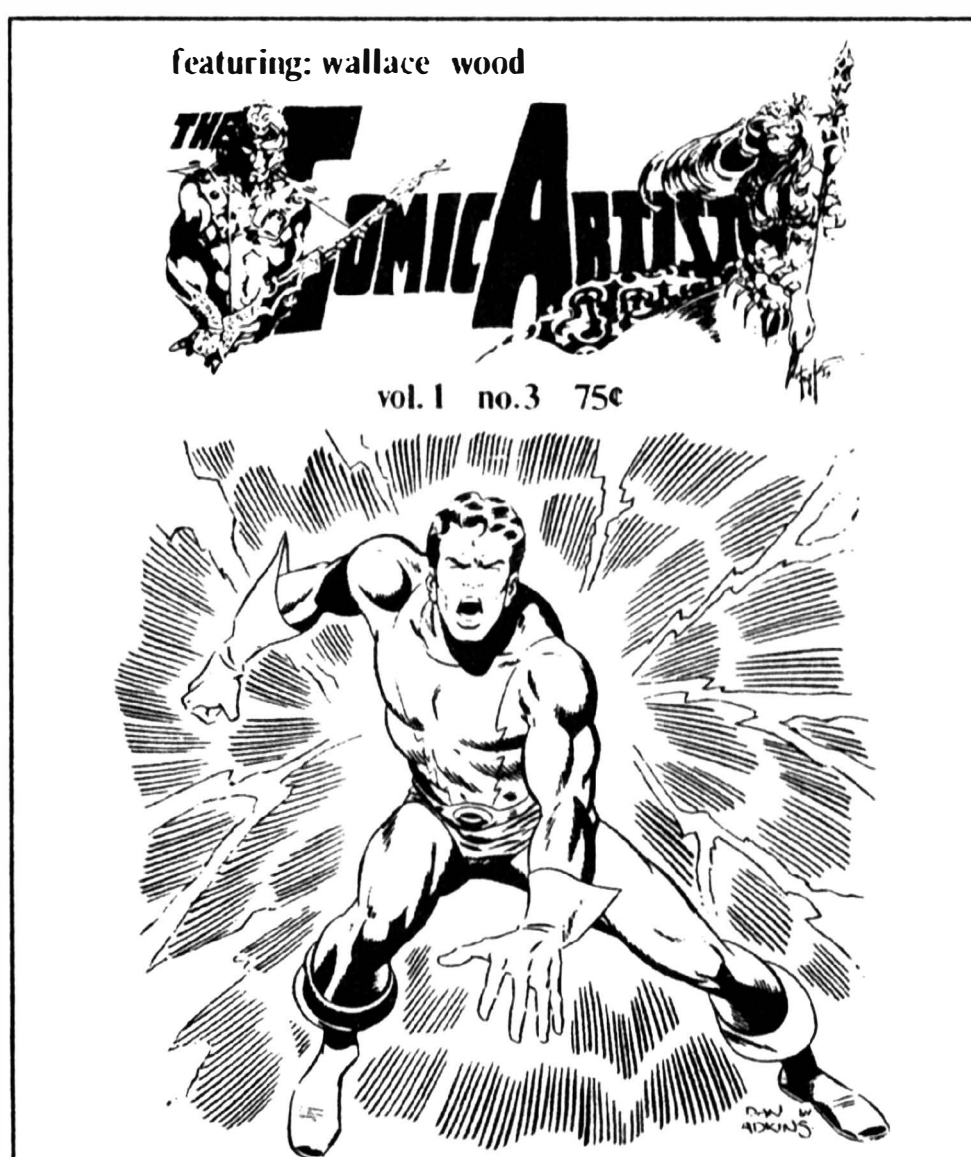
WHIZZBANG #11 .35

NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

WHIZZBANG #12

NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

WHIZZBANG #13



The Comic Artist #3 (1970)



Comic Fandom Monthly #5 (1971)



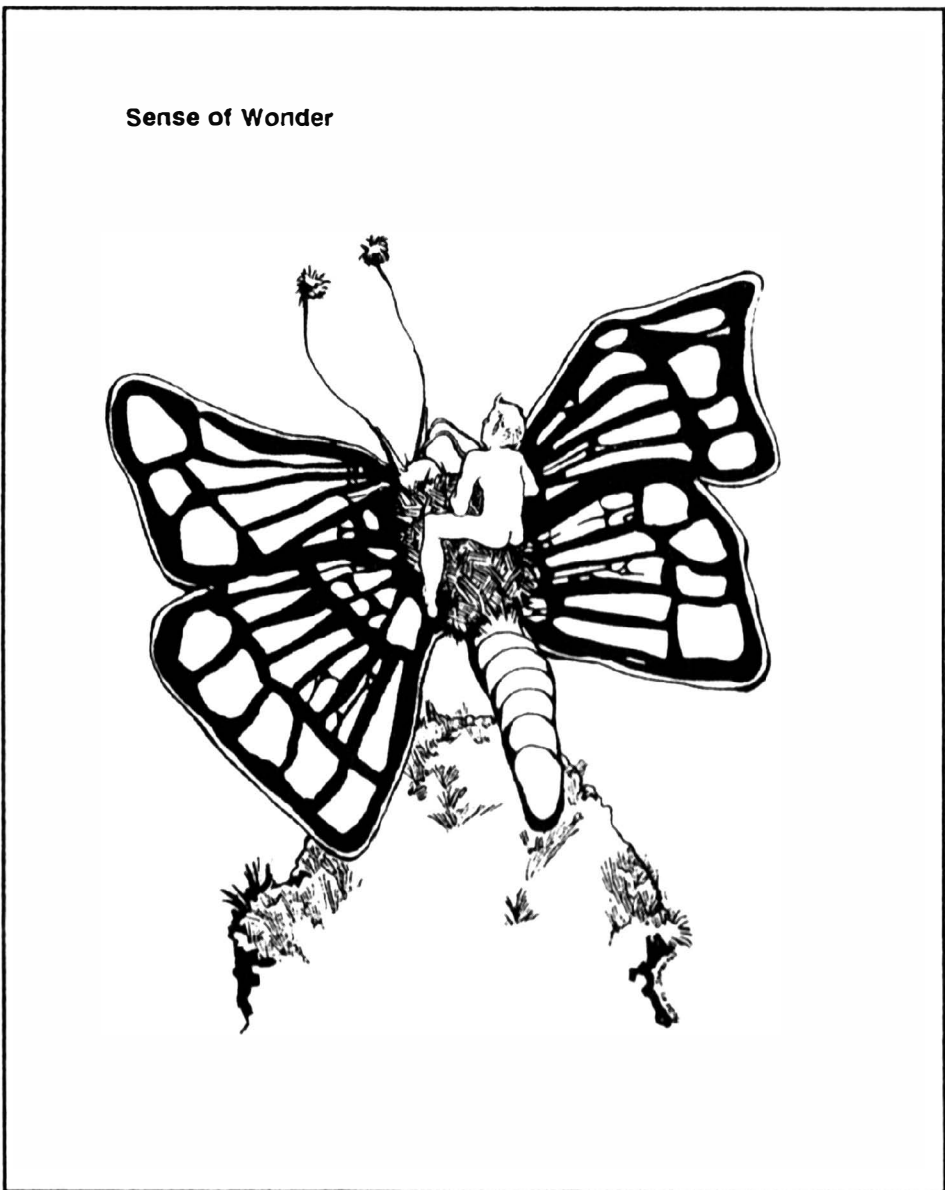
NEWFANGLES #43 (JANUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #44 (FEBRUARY)  
NEWFANGLES #45 (MARCH)  
NEWFANGLES #46 (APRIL)  
NEWFANGLES #47 (MAY)  
NEWFANGLES #48 (JUNE)  
NEWFANGLES #49 (JULY)  
NEWFANGLES #50 (AUGUST)  
NEWFANGLES #51 (SEPTEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #52 (OCTOBER)  
NEWFANGLES #53 (NOVEMBER)  
NEWFANGLES #54 (DECEMBER)  
NUCLEUS #6 .60  
NUCLEUS #7 1.10 FREAS COVER  
PARAGON #3  
PHANTASMAGORIA #1 (SUMMER)  
3.00  
PHASE #1 5.00  
PRODIGY #1 (FALL) .25

COLLAGE #19  
COLLAGE #20 (LAST ISSUE)  
COLLECTOR, THE #26 (SUMMER) 1.00  
COMIC BOOK #5  
COMIC CRUSADER #12 .50 (FOSS)  
COMIC CRUSADER #13 .75  
COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #5 (JAN)  
.50  
COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #6 (FEB)  
.50  
COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY #7  
(MARCH) .50  
COMIC FANDOM MOTLEY #8  
COMIQUE #7  
COMIQUE #8 .35 (OBRIAN GANG)  
COMIXSCENE #1 .50 (DOC SAVAGE)  
CREATIVE ADVENTURE, THE #2  
(JULY) 1.00 JANSON  
FANDOM SPECTACULAR (SCHELLY,  
LANZ)  
FLOTSAM #3 .50 (LANZ/SCHELLY  
STRIP)  
FUNNYWORLD #14 (SPRING) 1.25  
GEORGE #10 (FEB/MARCH) LAST  
ISSUE  
GRAPHIC FANTASY #3 (SPRING) .85  
GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #5  
(FEBRUARY)  
GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #6 (JULY)  
GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #7  
(SEPTEMBER) .60  
GRAPHIC STORY WORLD #8  
(DECEMBER) .60  
MACABRE WESTERN #1 .60  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #14 .60  
NOSTALGIA NEWS #15  
NOSTALGIA NEWS #16  
OVERLAND EXPRESS, THE #4 (JUNE)  
.25

RB-CC #90  
RB-CC #91  
RB-CC #92  
RB-CC #93  
RB-CC #94



Graphic Story World #3 (1971)  
215



Bob Sanborn artwork  
Sense of Wonder #10 (1971)

RB-CC #95 (1.00)  
RB-CC #96  
SENSE OF WONDER #11 (SPRING) .50  
(DITKO, SPIRIT)  
SENSE OF WONDER #12  
(SUMMER/FALL)  
SENTINEL #2 (SPRING) .35  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #18  
(SUMMER) .75 FINAL ISSUE  
TITLE #1 (APRIL) (ED APRIL DEATH  
NOTICE)  
VIRIDIAN STARFIRE #2 (FEB)

## 1973

ACBA SKETCHBOOK  
BULLDOG #1 (SEPTEMBER)  
BULLDOG #2 (FEBRUARY)  
BULLDOG #3 (DECEMBER)  
COMIC BOOK #6  
COMIC CRUSADER #14  
COMIC CRUSADER #15 VG  
COMIC FANTASY QUARTERLY #1  
(NOV)  
COMIC MEDIA #11 (DECEMBER)  
BRITISH  
COMIC MEDIA VOL. 2 NO 3  
(SEPTEMBER) BRITISH  
COMIQUE #9  
COMIXSCENE #2 .50 (SHAZAM)  
COMIXSCENE #3 .50 (HORROR)  
COMIXSCENE #4 .50 (DRUGS AND  
COMICS)  
COMIXSCENE #5 1.00 (SWORD &  
SORCERY)  
COMIXSCENE #6 .(JOHN CARTER)  
ETCETERA #1 (JANUARY) .60 LEVITZ,  
KUPPERBERG  
FAN INFORMER #35 (OCTOBER) .50  
FANDOM MARKETPLACE #2 (SFCA)  
FUNNYWORLD #15 (FALL) 1.25



RB-CC #77  
RB-CC #78  
RB-CC #79  
RB-CC #82  
RB-CC #84  
RB-CC #85  
RB-CC #86  
SAN DIEGO COMICON BOOKLET  
SENSE OF WONDER #10 (FALL) .50  
STAR STUDDED COMICS #17  
(SUMMER) 1.00  
VOICE OF COMICDOM #17  
WITZEND #8 (SUMMER) 1.50

## 1972

CINEFANTASTIQUE #6 (APES)  
CINEFANTASTIQUE V2. #1  
COLLAGE #14  
COLLAGE #15  
COLLAGE #16  
COLLAGE #17  
COLLAGE #18





Chronicle #4 (1974)

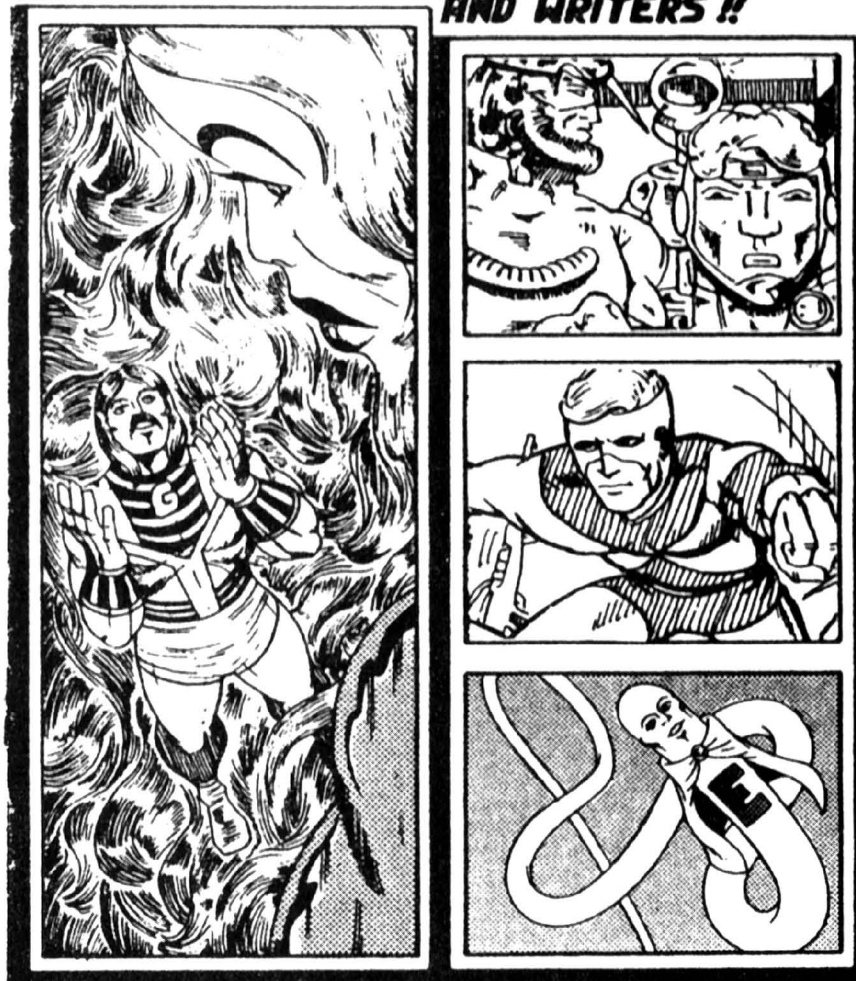
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #15  
(SUMMER) 1.00  
MEDIASCENE #7 (CRIME &  
VIOLENCE)  
MONSTER TIMES #24 .60  
MONSTER TIMES #26 .60  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #15  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #16  
NUCLEUS #8 1.00 WRIGHTSON  
COVER  
PARAGON SUPER HEROES #1  
RB-CC #97  
RB-CC #98  
RB-CC #99  
RB-CC #100  
RB-CC #101  
RB-CC #102  
RB-CC #103  
RB-CC #104  
RB-CC #105  
TALES OF TORMENT #13 (SUMMER)  
WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN COMIC  
BOOKS #1 7.00  
WITZEND #9 (W.C. FIELDS) \$5.00  
WONDERWORLD #9 (AUGUST) .75  
WONDERWORLD #10 (NOVEMBER)  
.75  
YMIR V2. N1.

## 1974

BATMANIA #19 (SEPTEMBER) FIRST  
"NEW" ISSUE  
BATMANIA #20 (DECEMBER) .50  
BULLDOG #5 (APRIL)  
BULLDOG #6 (SEPTEMBER)  
BULLDOG #7 (DECEMBER)

CARL COMICS #1 (D. STEVENS INKED  
COVER)  
CHRONICLE #4 .50 BYRNE ART  
COMIC CRUSADER #16  
COMIC READER, THE #103  
(JANUARY-FEBRUARY) .40  
COMIC READER, THE #104 (MARCH)  
.40  
COMIC READER, THE #113  
(DECEMBER) .50  
CPL #11  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #30 (MARCH)  
DATELINE: COMICDOM #31 (APRIL)  
FANSTRIPS #1 (JANUARY)  
FURION #1 (DECEMBER)  
GOLDEN AGE GREATS #1  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #16  
(SUMMER) 1.50  
GRAVE TALES (PEARSON)  
GREEN EGG 1.00  
IOTA #1 (FEBRUARY) .15  
IOTA #2 (MAY) .35  
ISSUES #6 (APRIL) RONN & COREEN  
FOSS  
ISSUES #7 (MAY)  
ISSUES #8 (JULY)  
ISSUES #9 (SEPTEMBER)  
MEDIASCENE #10 1.50 (SCI-FI)  
MEDIASCENE #12 (GODFATHER  
PART II)  
MEDIASCENE #8 (PIN-UP GIRLS)  
MONSTER TIMES #36 .75  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #17 .60  
NUCLEUS #9 1.25  
PARAGON #4  
RB-CC #106  
RB-CC #107 C.C.BECK COVER  
RB-CC #108  
RB-CC #109  
RB-CC #110

IN THIS ISSUE... **THE ORIGIN OF GARGUS!** NO.3  
**TIM CORRIGAN'S** FEB-MAR 60¢  
**SUPERHERO**  
COMICS **FANDOMS ONLY FORUM FOR AMATEUR ARTISTS AND WRITERS!**



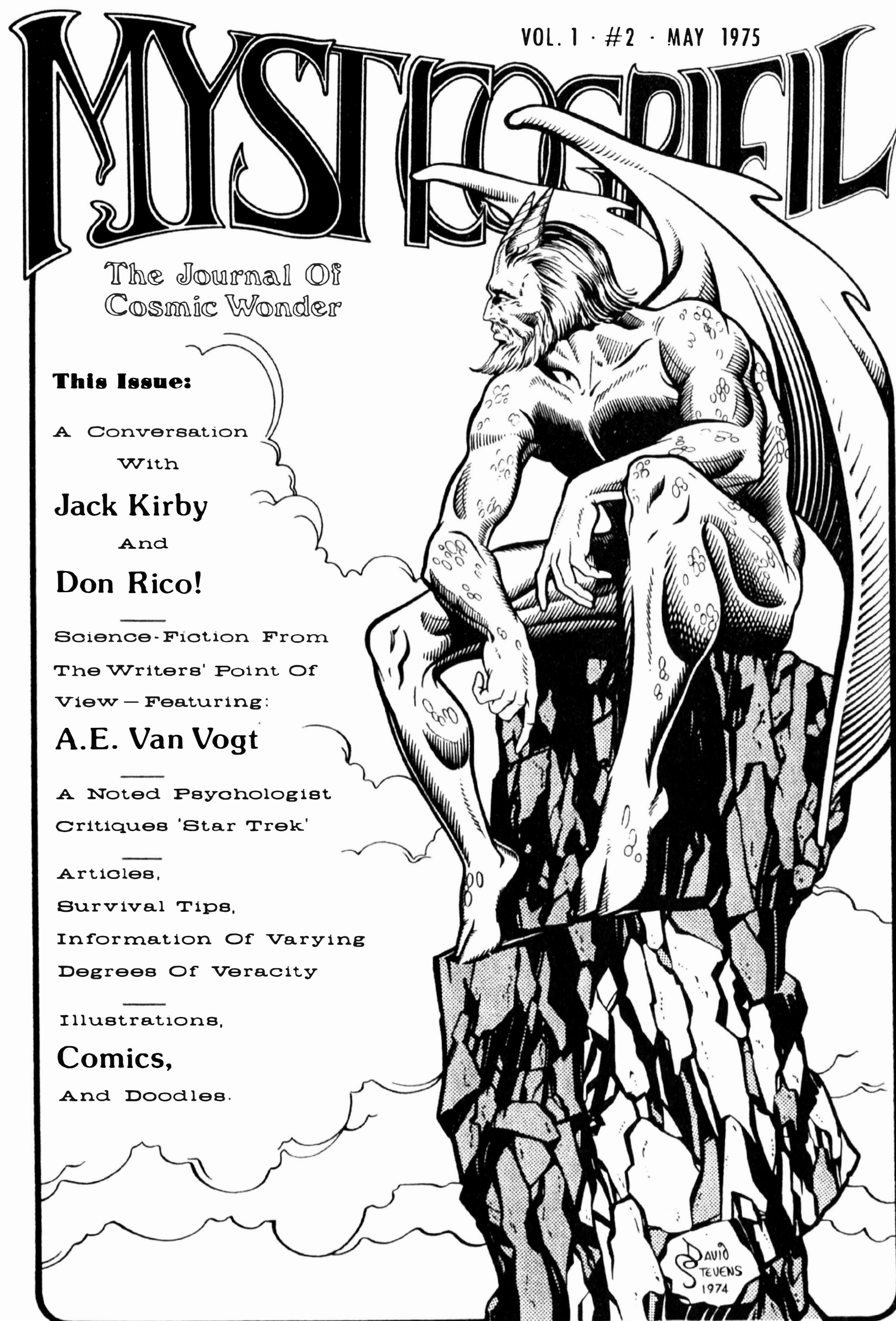
RB-CC #111  
RB-CC #112  
RB-CC #113 R.C. HARVEY COVER  
RB-CC #114 WRIGHTSON COVER  
SQUA TRONT #5 3.00  
STRIPPER, THE #3 (JANUARY) .50  
STRIPPER, THE #4 (MARCH) .50  
STRIPPER, THE #5 (MAY) .50  
STRIPPER, THE #6 (JULY)  
STRIPPER, THE #7  
STRIPPER, THE #8 (DECEMBER)  
TALES OF TORMENT #14  
UNIVERSE #3 (JUNE)

## 1975

BATMANIA #21 (APRIL)  
BULLDOG #8 (MARCH)  
CAPT. BILJO'S THE STRIPPER #9  
(FEBRUARY)  
CPL #12  
FANTASY CROSSROADS #2  
(FEBRUARY) 2.00  
FUNNYWORLD #16 (SPRING) 1.50  
FURION #2 (JANUARY)  
FURION #3 (OCTOBER)  
MEDIASCENE #13  
MEDIASCENE #14  
MEDIASCENE #15 1.50  
MYSTICOGRIEL #2 D. STEVENS  
COVER  
MYTHOS #1 (SPRING) .50 FOSS  
MYTHOS #2 (SUMMER) .50  
MYTHOS #3 (FALL) .50 STATON  
MYTHOS #4 (WINTER) .50  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S  
WHIZZBANG #18 .60  
OHIOCON BOOKLET  
OKAY COMIX #1 (MAY/JUNE) .60  
ORDWAY  
OKAY COMIX #2 (FALL) .60 ORDWAY  
RB-CC #115  
RB-CC #116  
RB-CC #117  
RB-CC #118  
RB-CC #119  
RB-CC #120  
RB-CC #121  
RB-CC #122  
RB-CC #123  
SQUA TRONT #6 3.00 (KRIGSTEIN  
ISSUE)  
TIM CORRIGAN'S SUPERHERO  
COMICS #3 (FEB)  
TRAVELING INFORMATION CENTER

Editor's Note: To a great extent, the smaller number of fanzines listed in the 1970s, as opposed to the late 1960s, is probably more a function of my waning involvement in fandom (due to college). However, my impression is that the sheer *number* of fanzines peaked around 1968.



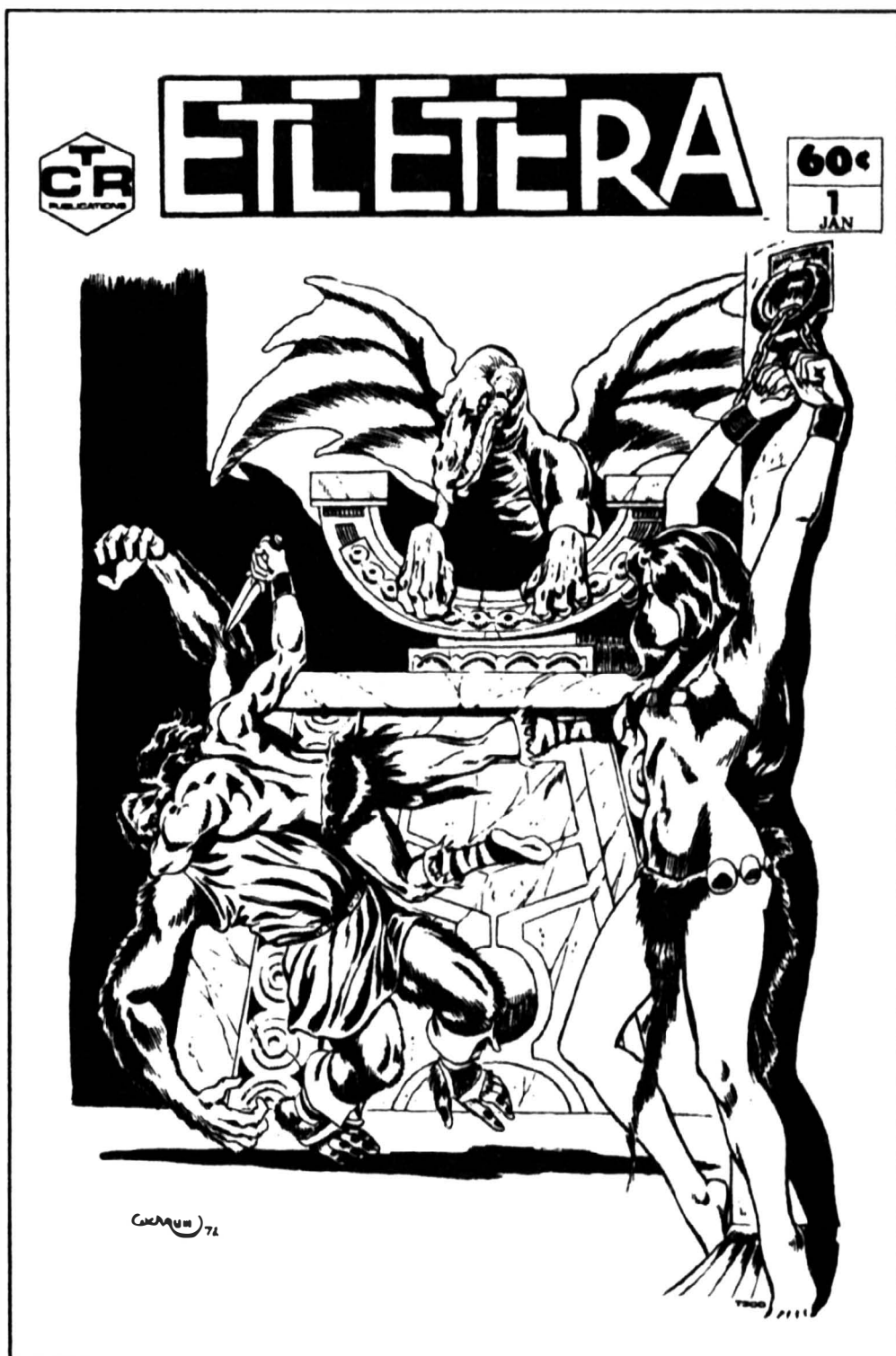




# Fanzines - alphabetical

This is an alphabetic listing of all the fanzine titles included in the “Fanzines by Year” section.

4-D (FOSS ARTICLE, DATE APPROXIMATE)  
A DECADE OF COMICS FAN AWARDS  
A TALK WITH H. KURTZMAN – JOHN BENSON  
ABNORMAL COMIX  
ACBA SKETCHBOOK  
ACTION  
ADVENTURE HEROES CAPERS  
AGAMENON WEEKLY #1  
ALTER EGO  
AMRA  
APEX  
ARGOSY PRICE GUIDE, THE  
ARTIST  
ASMODEUS  
ASTERISK - FANZINE



ASTERISK - NEWSLETTER  
ATTENTION WRITERS & ARTISTS (SSC CONTRIB NOTE)  
AUCTION BLOCK

BATMANIA  
BATWING  
BLASE

BLOOD AND THUNDER  
BOMBSHELL  
BRAVE ADVENTURE  
BULLDOG  
BULLSEYE  
BUM STEER  
  
CAPA-ALPHA  
CAPT. BILJO AKA THE EYE  
CAPT. BILJO PRESENTS  
CAPT. BILJO'S THE STRIPPER  
CAPT. GEORGE PRESENTS  
CAPT. GEORGE'S COMIC WORLD  
CARL COMICS  
CARTOONIST, THE CHAMPION #2  
CHAMPION  
CHRONICLE  
CINDER  
CINEFANTASTIQUE  
CLEVENTION PROGRAM BOOKLET  
CLEVENTION PROGRESS REPORT  
COLLAGE  
COLLECTOR [FRANKE]  
COLLECTOR, THE [WILSON]  
COLLECTOR'S CHRONICLE, THE  
COLLECTOR'S GUIDE: THE FIRST HEROIC AGE  
COLLECTOR'S HANDBOOK, THE  
COLLECTOR'S NEWS  
COLLECTOR'S NEWS SPECIAL  
COMET #1  
COMIC ADVERTISING REVIEW  
COMIC ART  
COMIC ARTIST, THE  
COMIC BOOK  
COMIC CAPER  
COMIC COLLECTOR'S NEWS  
COMIC COMMENTS  
COMIC CRUSADER  
COMIC CUTS  
COMIC FAN, THE  
COMIC FANDOM MONTHLY  
COMIC FANDOM MOTLEY  
COMIC FANDOM NEWSLETTER  
COMIC FAN'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LIT  
COMIC FANTASY QUARTERLY  
COMIC FAVORITE, THE  
COMIC FEATURE  
COMIC HEROES  
COMIC HEROES UNLIMITED (SFCA)  
COMIC LORE

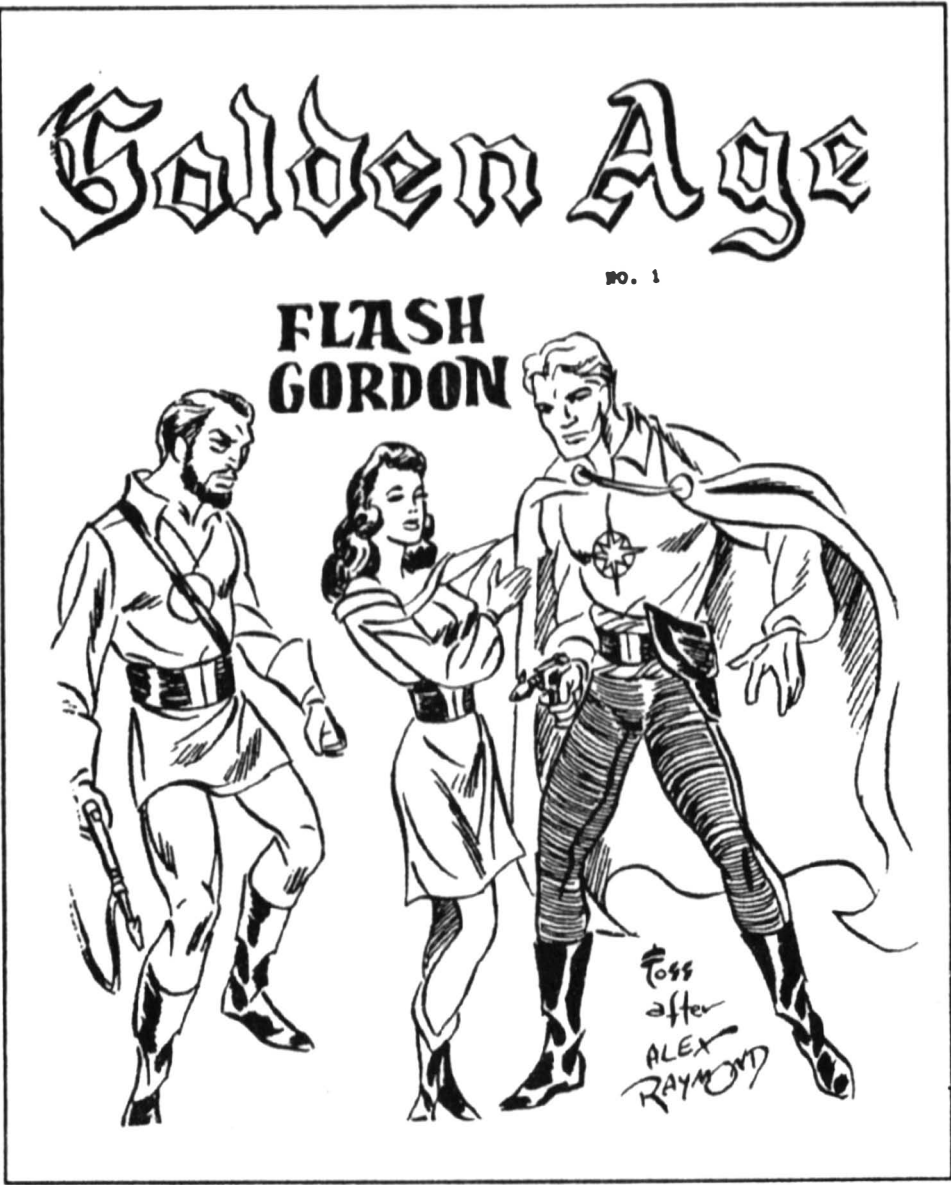
COMIC MEDIA  
COMIC POST  
COMIC READER, THE  
COMIC SPOTLITE [FORMERLY SPOTLITE]  
COMIC VENDER  
COMIC WORLD  
COMICDOM  
COMICCOLLECTOR, THE  
COMIQUE  
COMI-RAMA  
COMIXSCENE  
COMI-ZINE  
CONCEPT  
CONCUSSION  
COOPER'S HERO HOBBY  
COSMOSTILETTO  
COUNTDOWN  
CPL  
CREATIVE ADVENTURE, THE  
CRIMESTOPPER  
CRITIQUE  
CRYPT  
CRYPT-ARMAGEDDON  
CYCLOPS  
CYCLOPS MAGAZINE  
  
DALLASCON BULLETIN  
DANGLING CONVERSATION, THE  
DASFS JOURNAL  
DATELINE: COMICDOM  
DC INDEX, AN AUTHORITATIVE INDEX TO  
DCTC BULLETIN  
DESTINY  
DETROIT TRIPLE FAN FAIR - BROCHURE  
DIRECTIONS  
DISNEYDOM  
DOCTOR WEIRD  
DOWN UNDER  
DUAL IDENTITY  
  
E.C. FAN BULLETIN  
E.C. FAN JOURNAL, THE  
E.C. PRESS, THE  
E.C. SCOOP #1  
E.C. SLIME SHEET, THE  
E.C. SPEC SHEET, THE  
EAGLE, THE  
EGO  
ELECTRIC STORIES



ENCLAVE)  
ENTERPRISE  
ENTERPRISE MONTHLY  
EON  
EPIC COMICS  
EPOCH  
ERB-DOM  
ETCETERA  
EXP  
EYE SPECIAL, THE  
  
FAN INFORMER  
FAN TO FAN  
FANDOM ANNUAL  
FANDOM CALLING  
FANDOM MARKETPLACE (SFCA)  
FANDOM PRESENTS  
FANDOM SPECTACULAR  
FANDOMONIUM  
FANDOM'S AGENT  
FANDOM'S SPECIAL  
FANFARE  
FANSTRIPS  
FANTASTIC  
FANTASTIC  
FANTASTIC EXPLOITS  
FANTASTIC FANZINE  
FANTASY ART NEWS (F.A.C.T.  
NEWSLETTER)  
FANTASY COLLECTOR  
FANTASY CROSSROADS  
FANTASY FANDOM CROSSROADS  
FANTASY FILM JOURNAL  
FANTASY FORUM  
FANTASY HERO  
FANTASY HERO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL  
FANTASY HEROES HANGOUT  
FANTASY ILLUSTRATED  
FANTASY-COMICS  
FAPA MEMORY BOOK  
FAWN THE DARK-EYED  
FIGHTING HERO COMICS - SPECIAL  
EDITION #1 (OFFSET  
COLLECTION) S.F.C.A.  
FIGHTING HERO COMICS (FORMERLY  
FIGHTING HEROES)  
FIGHTING HEROES  
FLARE COMICS  
FLASH COMICS SPECIAL  
FLASHBACK  
FLOTSAM  
FLUSH  
FLYER (XERO)  
FOO!  
FOOB, THE  
FORBUSH GAZETTE, THE  
FORUM  
FRANTIC NEWSHEET  
FRANTIC  
FREON  
FUNNYWORLD  
FURION  
FUTURA

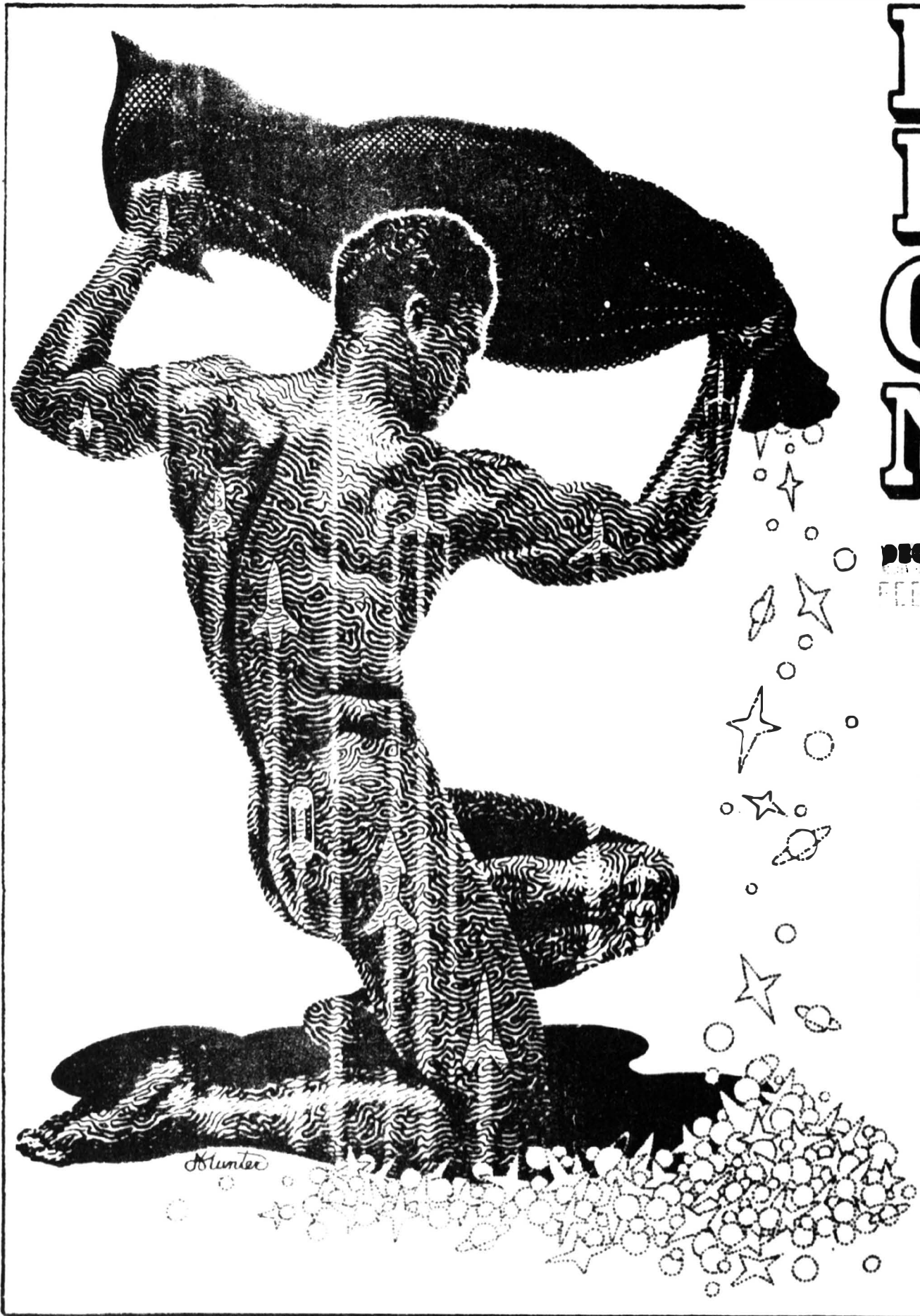
GEORGE  
GOD COMICS  
GOLDEN AGE  
GOLDEN AGE GREATS  
GOOD LORD!  
GORGON II, THE  
GOSH WOW!  
GRAPHCO BULLETIN  
GRAPHIC FANTASY  
GRAPHIC SHOWCASE  
GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE  
GRAPHIC STORY WORLD  
GRAVE TALES (PEARSON)  
GREEN EGG  
GREMLIN  
GRIDLEY WAVE, THE  
GUIDEBOOK TO COMICS FANDOM,  
THE  
GUTS  
  
HARBINGER  
HARVEY KURTZMAN SATIRE CLUB  
BULLETIN  
HB PRESENTS  
HEADLINE  
HERO  
HERODOM  
HEROES  
HEROES' HANGOUT  
HEROES' HANGOUT SUPPLEMENT  
HEROES ILLUSTRATED  
HEROES UNLIMITED  
HEROIC  
HK DIGEST  
HK READER, THE  
HOOHAH  
HUH?I  
  
ILLUSTRATED COMIC COLLECTORS  
HANDBOOK  
IMAGE  
INCOGNITO  
INCOGNITO EXTRA  
INFINITY BOUND  
INKLING  
INTRIGUE  
IOTA  
ISSUE, THE  
ISSUES (FORMERLY "THE ISSUE")  
IT!  
  
JACK HIGH  
JACK'S HIGH  
JEDDAK  
JOURNAL OF SF 1951 MAGAZINE  
INDEX  
JOURNAL OF THE V.F.B.M.  
JOURNAL OF THE WORLD SF SOCIETY  
JOURNEY INTO COMICS  
  
KALEIDOSCOPE  
KOMIK HEROES OF THE FUTURE  
KOMIK HEROZ OF THE FUTURE  
KOMIX ILLUSTRATED  
KOMIX THRILLS

KOMIX, THE  
  
MACABRE WESTERN  
MAGNUM OPUS  
MANEKI-NEKO  
MARVEL GAZETTE, THE  
MARVEL MAIN #3  
MARVELMANIA #5  
MARVELMANIA MAGAZINE  
MASK AND CAPE  
MASQUERADER  
MASTERMIND  
MEDIASCENE  
MEN OF MYSTERY  
MINOTAUR  
MODERN COLLECTOR'S REVIEW  
MONSTER TIMES  
MONTAGE  
MUSEUM  
MYSTICOGRIEL  
MYTHOS  
  
NEDOR COMIC INDEX  
NEW CAPTAIN GEORGE'S WHIZZBANG  
NEW YORK COMICON BOOKLET '64  
NEWFANGLES  
NIMROD  
NOPE  
NORB'S NOTES - 1962 ANNUAL  
NOSTALGIA NEWS  
NUCLEUS  
NYCON COMICS  
  
OAF  
ODD  
OHIOCON BOOKLET  
OKAY COMIX  
OMNIFAN  
ON THE DRAWING BOARD  
OPARIAN, THE  
ORK  
OUTRE  
OVERLAND EXPRESS



The Golden Age #1 (1965)





Cover to Peon #38 with "I Remember Comic Books"

# PEON

DEC 1964  
FEB 1967

STORY ART  
STRIPPER, THE  
SUMMER DAZE  
SUPER ADVENTURES  
SUPER HERO  
SUPER HEROES  
ANONYMOUS  
SUPER NOVA  
SUPER-THEATER

TALES OF TOREMENT  
TALK WITH B. KRIGSTEIN  
THE!  
THROUGH THE LENS  
TIM CORRIGAN'S  
SUPERHERO COMICS  
TINT (FORMERLY SLAM-  
BANG)  
TITAN COMICS  
TITLE  
TOWER COMICS  
TRAVELING INFORMATION  
CENTER  
TRUMPET

UNIVERSE

VALOR  
VANGUARD  
VICTOR'S VIEWS  
VIRIDIAN STARFIRE  
VOICE OF COMICDOM

WEBSPINNER  
WEIRDOM  
WHO'S WHO IN COMIC  
FANDOM  
WHO'S WHO IN COMIC  
FANDOM SUPPLEMENT  
WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN  
COMIC BOOKS  
WILD!  
WINE-VINE, THE  
(NEWSLETTER)  
WITZEND  
WIZIT  
WONDERFUL WORLD OF  
COMIX  
WONDERMENT  
WONDERWORLD  
(FORMERLY GRAPHIC  
STORY WORLD)  
WORLD OF COMIC ART, THE  
WRITERS FELLOWSHIP  
BULLETIN

XERO  
XERO INDEX

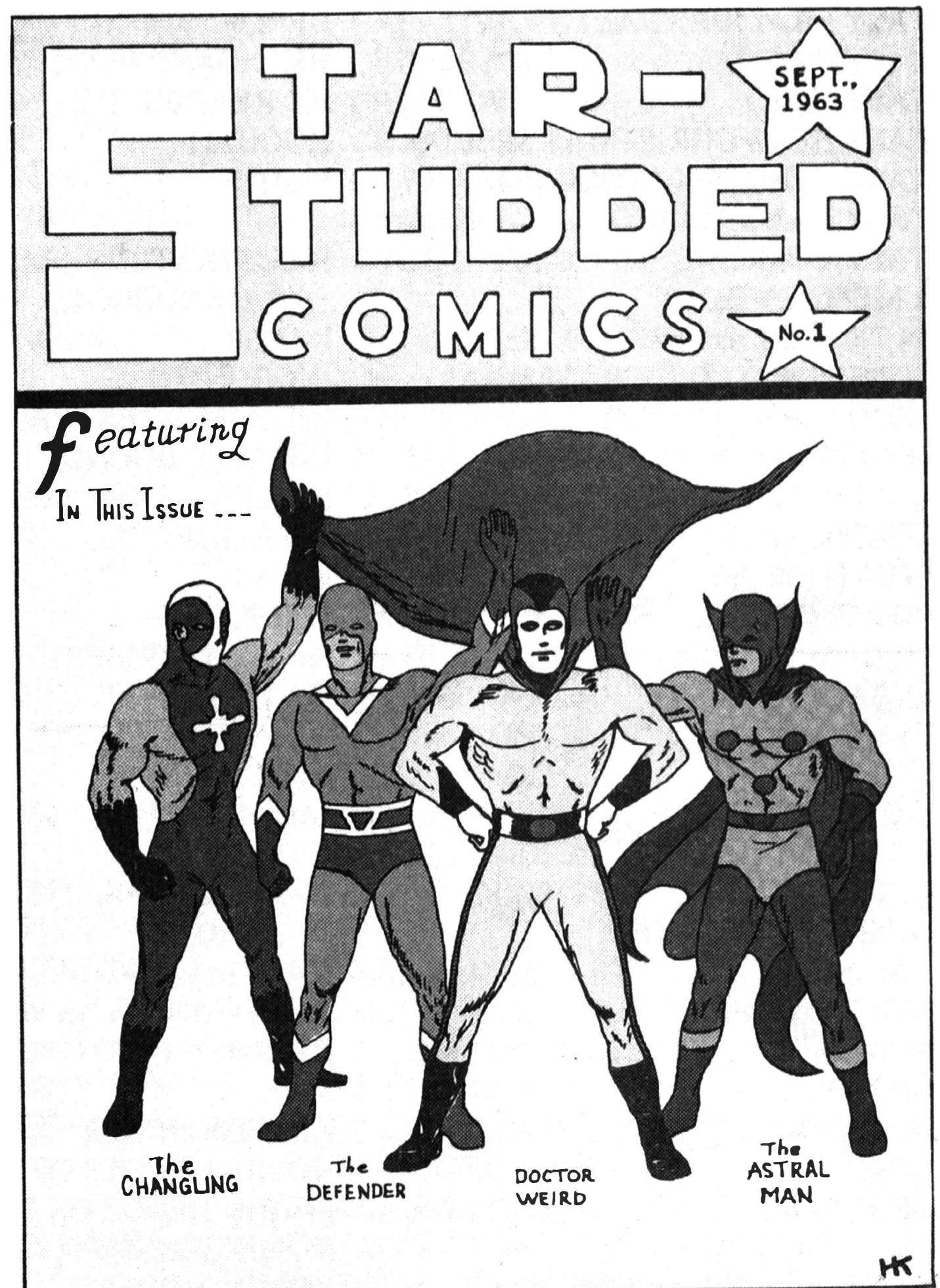
YANCY STREET JOURNAL  
Y MIR

ZENITH (FORMERLY  
SANCTUM)

ZIP

PANDORA  
PANEL ART EXAMINER,  
PANELOLOGIST  
PARAGON  
PARAGON ILLUSTRATED  
PARAGON SUPER HEROES  
PARSECTION  
PEON  
PHANTASMAGORIA  
PHASE  
PHOENIX  
POTRZEBIE  
PRODIGY  
  
RAPPORT II  
ROCKET'S BLAST-  
COMICCOLLECTOR (RB-  
CC)  
RB-CC ANNUAL  
REVIEW (DOUG MOENCH)  
ROCK  
ROCKET'S BLAST, THE  
ROCKETS BLAST SPECIAL  
ROCKET'S BLAST SPECIAL  
EDITION  
RUMBLE, THE  
SAN DIEGO COMICON  
BOOKLET

SAN DIEGO CON #1  
PROGRAM BK  
SANCTUM  
SATA  
SATURDAY'S WORLD  
SAVAGE PRINCESS  
SENSE OF WONDER  
SENTINEL  
SEYMOUR MEDNICK FAN  
CLUB  
SHAG  
SHAZAM!  
SKYBIRD  
SLAM-BANG  
SMASHEROO  
SMUDGE  
SMUDGE SUPPLEMENT  
SON OF VANGUARD  
SOONER COMICS  
SPA FON  
SPECTRE  
SPIDEY FAN  
SPOOF!  
SPOTLITE  
SPOTLITE SUPPLEMENT  
SQUA TRONT  
SQUATRONT!  
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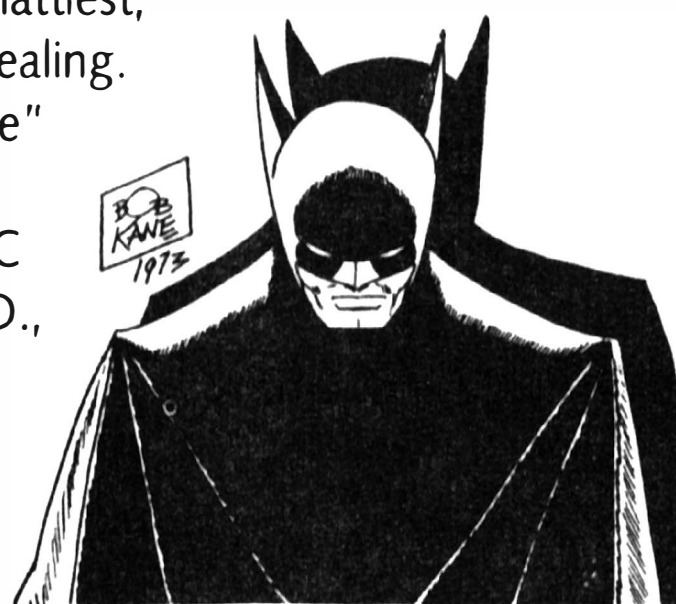
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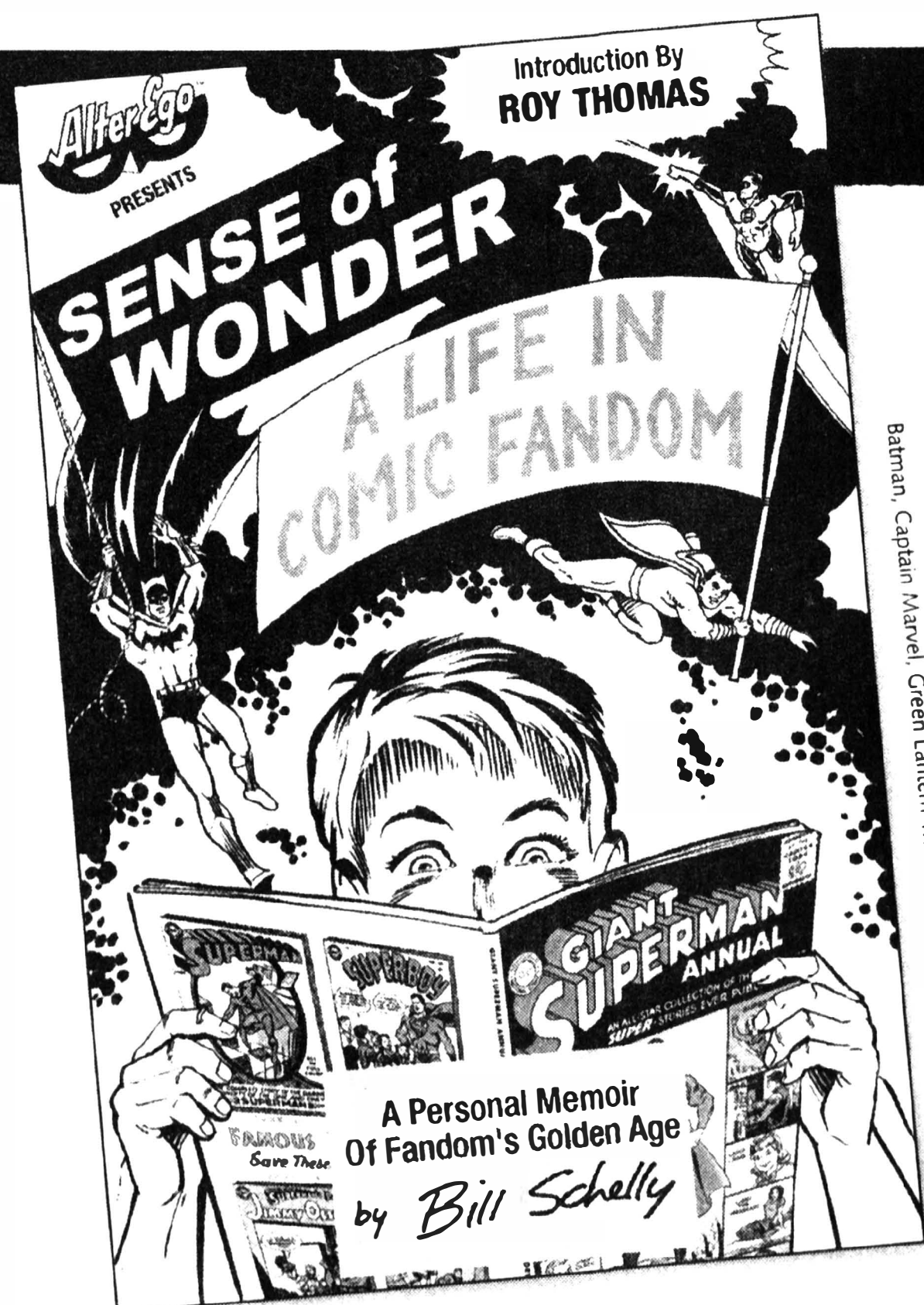
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"Despite the fact that my discovery of comic books pre-dates Bill Schelly's by decades, our experiences were eerily similar. I had a vivid recall of reading **ACTION COMICS** starring Superman in the late 1930s. If you've ever liked comic books, you'll love **SENSE OF WONDER**."

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"Bill Schelly has an obsessive yet intelligent passion for things many might consider marginal if not bizarre—always the mark of an interesting mind."

**TOM ROBBINS**, Author, *Fierce Invalids Home From Hot Climates*

"Like Schelly's earlier books, **SENSE OF WONDER** allows old-timers to reminisce about the early days of fandom, because they've been there—and allows all newcomers to experience what they missed. I loved every word of it!"

**GARY CARTER**, former editor, *Comic Book Marketplace*

"Anyone with memories of being a kid with a seemingly oddball enthusiasm will identify with Bill Schelly's tale of how he found in comics fandom a network of widely scattered new friends and a wealth of ways to grow creatively."

**HOWARD CRUSE**, Author, *Stuck Rubber Baby & Wendel All Together*

"Bill Schelly's autobiographical narrative displays a storyteller's sensibility and ends tidily with an epiphany that signals that the fan has grown up but remembers fondly—as do we all, all of us who have survived our youth and adolescence because we had comic books to sustain us and cartooning to aspire to."

**R.C. HARVEY**, Author, *The Art of the Comic Strip*



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6

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WARMONSTER  
meets the  
EYE

26

THRILLING  
PAGES!

MR MONSTER TM 2002 Michael T. Gilbert  
THE EYE TM 2002 Bill Schelly

HEROES VS  
HITLER

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THE ECLIPSE!  
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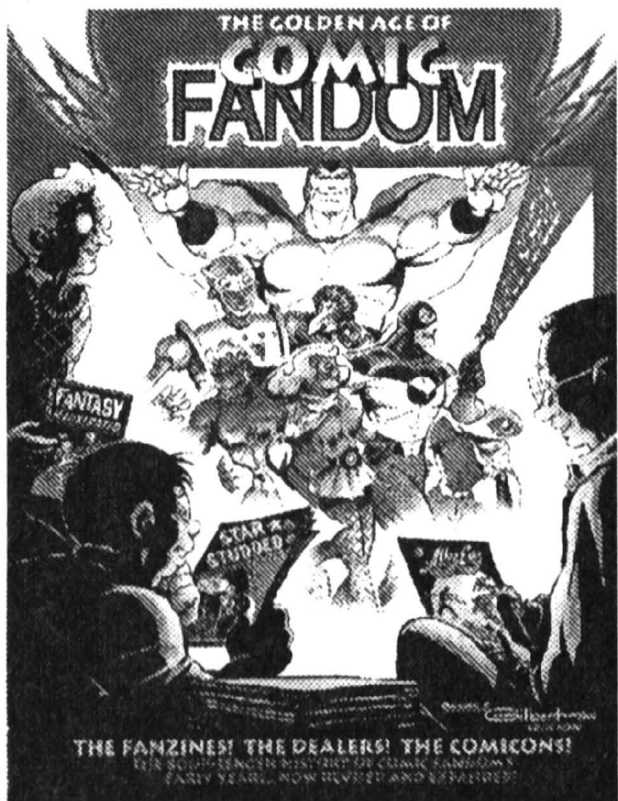
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Hamster Press' biggest seller by far, this book tells the history of comic fandom beginning with its roots in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, but concentrating mainly on the period from 1960 to 1972 which Schelly deems fandom's "Golden Age." Loaded with extremely rare photographs and artwork, the book tells how *Alter Ego* and *Comic Art* ignited an explosion of interest in comic books and strips, and traces how fandom grew in leaps and bounds. The history of the comicons is fully explored, and the book also includes much information about the biggest comics dealers of the time. 8 ½ x 11" trade paperback, 4-color insert. **\$14.95**

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**DISCOUNTED FROM \$14.95**

**GIANT LABORS OF LOVE** Here they are: the rarest of the rare amateur comic strips from the ditto fanzines that were so prevalent in fandom's early days. Book includes "Dimension Man" and "The Viper" by Foss, "The Eye" and "The Lion" by Biljo White, "Speed Marvel" by Grass Green, "Capt. Liberty & Doc Darkness" by Steve Perrin and Rich Buckler, "The Demon" by Buddy Saunders and more. This is a special limited edition, with each strip lovingly restored. They look amazing!! Oh yeah, there's also "The O'Brian Gang!" by Hamster honcho Bill Schelly, plus the usual annotations by Schelly. 112 pages. **\$12.00**

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## End Notes

**C**omic Fandom Reader is the sixth book devoted to the history of fandom from Hamster Press.

In order of appearance, they are: *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom*, *Fandom's Finest Comics Vol. 1*, *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine*, *Fandom's Finest Comics Vol. 2* and *Giant Labors of Love*.

Including this book, they offered 1,180 pages of material either about, or from, those formative years of comicdom from 1961 to 1972!

Will there be more? You may have noticed the advertisements proclaiming this the "final, ultimate book" in the series. That may very well be the case. Not that there isn't plenty more material, but after all, shouldn't we leave *something* for the fanzine collectors among you?

It *would* be tempting to do a follow-up to this edition. While we've offered some work by fandom's best writers: Kyle, Fagan, Thomas, Ryan, Miller, Willits and the rest—that's hardly scratching the surface. What about such superior scribes as Michael Barrier, John Benson, Rick Weingroff, Fred Patten, Don Thompson and Tony Isabella, just to pick some obvious names out of the air?

Therefore, the official Hamster line is "never say never." If this book sells well, and if the time is right, then perhaps there *will* be more. Just not right away.

Next on the agenda is the already-completed book titled *The Eye Collection* which is ballyhooed elsewhere herein. It's a 144-page trade paperback that collects the two new Eye strips from *The Eye – Special Edition #1* and *Heroes Vs. Hitler*, and offers two brand-new adventures of the Underworld Executioner: "Injury to the Eye!" and "The Untold Origin of The Eye!" It also reprints the only remaining Eye strip by Biljo White from fandom's Golden Age, and is loaded with extra features and special artwork by the likes of Batton Lash, Michael T. Gilbert, Fred Fredericks, Jerry Ordway, etc. This very cool book will be shipping in June 2002. Look for the advance solicitation in the April Diamond *Previews*.

What about other comics from Hamster Press, starring The Eclipse, Alter and Capt. Ego, or maybe even The Immortal Corpse? Suffice it to say that in today's market, it's important to proceed cautiously. By doing so, we've managed to remain basically solvent, at least to the extent of breaking even. Much depends on the reception *The Eye Collection* receives, both critically and sales-wise. Whatever we do, you may be sure that the comics we produce will be readable done-in-one stories that emphasize the script and artwork *equally*. We want you to be able to order any Hamster book in advance, confident that you'll *never* get a slipshod product.

Now I'd like to take a few moments to thank everyone who has contributed so much to our books and comics. A veritable "who's who" of fandom has been represented in our catalogue, and I'm fully aware that 99% of the success of these books is due to their talents.

In particular, I'd like to thank two guys whose input has been essential: Roy Thomas and Jeff Gelb.

Roy has had something to do with just about everything published by Hamster Press, perhaps most significantly

agreeing to write an introduction to *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom* which convinced a lot of people that the book was worth a look. His participation in the *Heroes Vs. Hitler* comic certainly helped it become our best-selling single publication. Roy has been unfailingly generous with his time and support, and I want everyone to know how much his input has meant to Hamster Press.

Much the same thing can be said about Jeff Gelb, who I consider my best friend in fandom. Although his role has largely been behind the scenes, as an editorial consultant and reliable sounding board, you can be sure that Jeff's

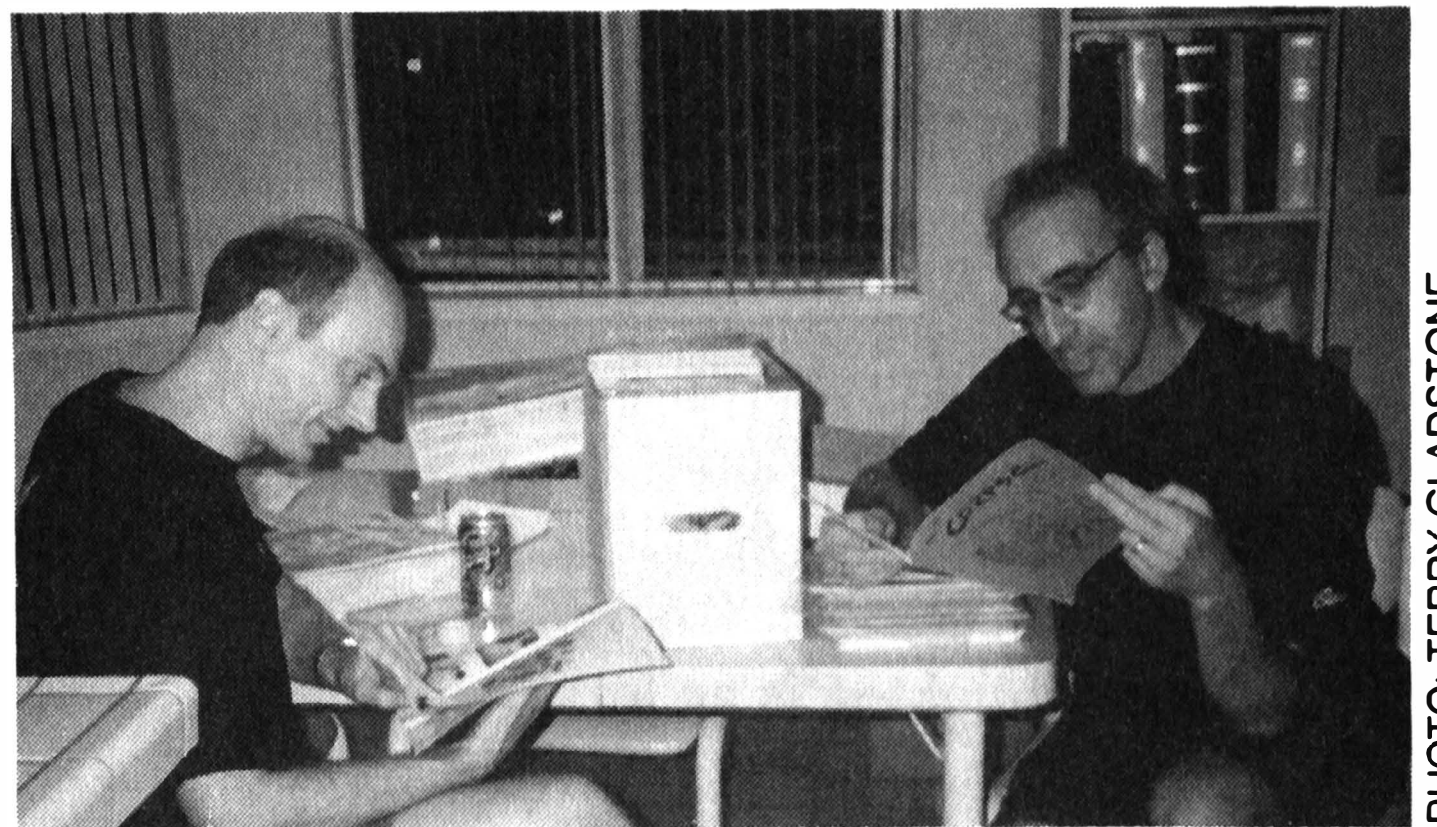


PHOTO: TERRY GLADSTONE

*Yours Truly and Jeff Gelb, at Jeff's house in Redondo Beach, California, at a favorite pastime: looking through a box of vintage fanzines.*

suggestions have helped shape a lot of what we've done, from the titles of books, the contents therein, and more. Like Roy, he's been a part of my fandom history projects from Day One, and I can't imagine publishing without him nearby.

There's something else: both Rascally Roy and Jaunty Jeff are true blue comics fans, and their enthusiasm has been both a joy and an inspiration to me. Thanks guys!!

Last but not least, I thank *you*—the readers—for buying the books, for writing the letters and emails, and for urging me onward. Your encouragement has meant the world to me.

What will I be up to in the future?

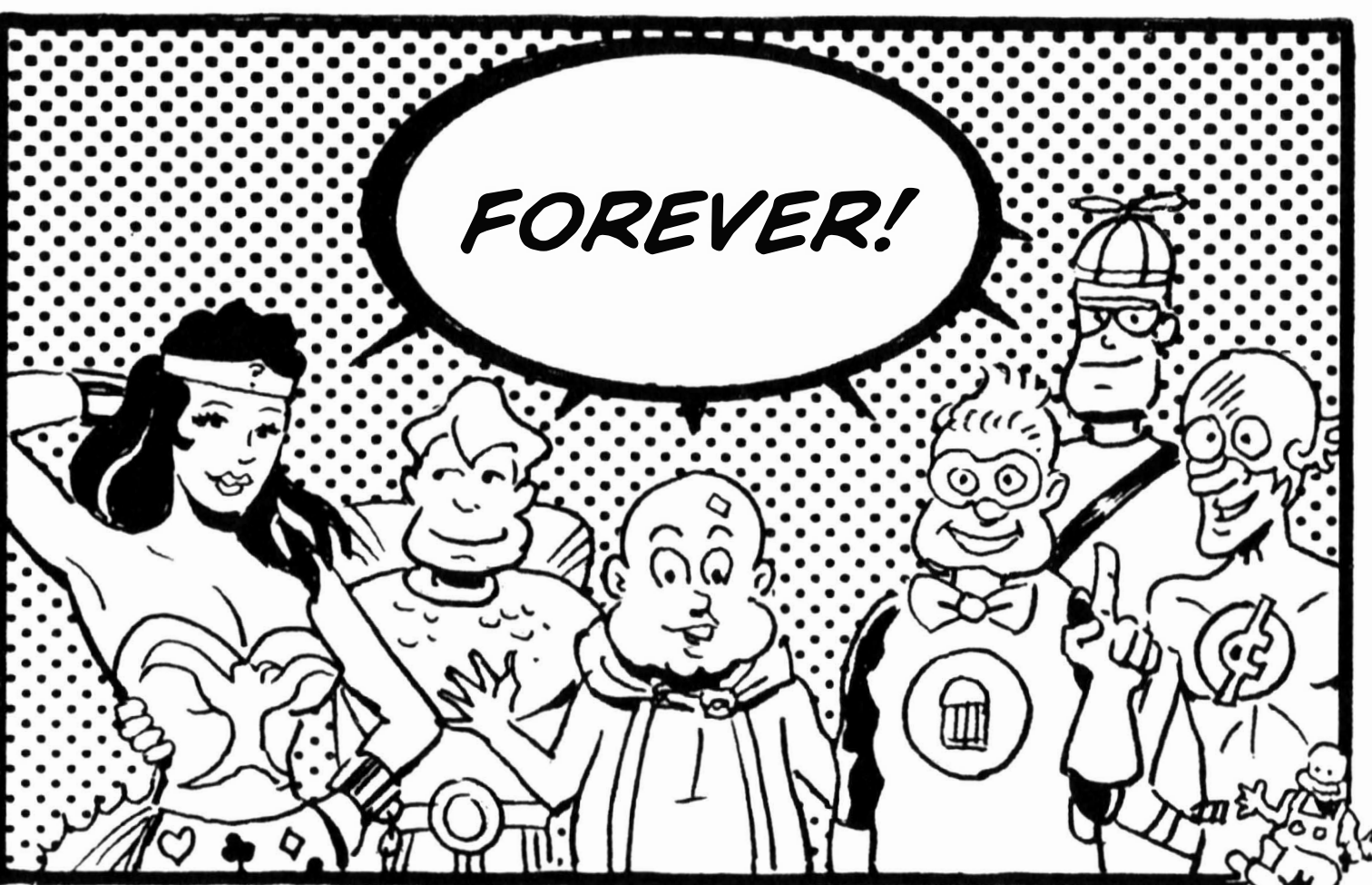
First and foremost, I will continue as Associate Editor of *Alter Ego* magazine from TwoMorrows Publishing, contributing Comic Fandom Archive columns to each issue (and helping Roy in any other capacity necessary). You can order AE and other fine products from TwoMorrows on their web site at [www.twomorrows.com](http://www.twomorrows.com).

Beyond that—I have another book or two up my sleeve, but it's too early to talk about them. All I can say is: they're comics-related, and I'm really excited about them.

*Comic Fandom Forever!!!*

*Bill Schelly*





PENCILS: BILL SCHELLY - INKS: MICHAEL GILBERT



